INSIDE THE AQUARIUM

The Making of a Top Soviet Spy

VIKTOR SUVOROV

Author of INSIDE THE SOVIET ARMY

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VIKIORSUVORˆ

Author of INSIDE THE SOVIET ARMY

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INSDEIIL

Soviet defector Viktor Suvorov's reveal-ing account of how he became a Sovietspy could not be more timely. Recentevents like the uncovering of the Walkerspy ring, the on-again-off-again defectionof Vitaly Yurchenko, and the publicationof Arkady Shevchenko's Breaking withMoscow have caused an internationalfuror.

Now, in this fascinating and frighteningbook, Viktor Suvorov takes us inside theAquarium, Moscow headquarters of theGRU, the super-secret Russian militaryintelligence organization and rival of theKGB. It is here that agents are brought tobe trained, disciplined, and, when neces-sary, broken.

In shocking fashion, Suvorov recountsthe first day of training when he is forcedto watch a film that shows a disaffectedGRU agent being burned alive. This ishow the GRU reveals to its trainees thatthere is only one way out of the orga-nization—death.

Other GRU methods are as physicallytorturous as the viewing of that film isterrifying: electric shocks used to punisha failure of memory; being pushed off aspeeding train; hand-to-hand combat withdeath-row prisoners recruited for theirviciousness. All are employed in the train-ing of a top agent.

It is the agent's job—once he is in thefield—to gather information in any wayhe can. No source of information is too

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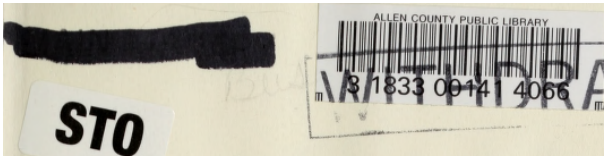

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SUVOROV

Viktor

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Inside the Aquarium

By the same author

The Liberators

Inside the Soviet Army

Inside Soviet Mihtary IntelUgence

For Tanya

5013957

Prologue

*We have a very simple rule: it's a rouble to get in, but two to get out. Thatmeans that it's difficult to join the organisation, but a lot more difficult to getout of it. Theoretically there's only one way out for any member of theorganisation - through the chimney of the crematorium. For some it is anhonourable exit, but for others it is a shameful and terrible way to go, butthere's only the one chimney for all of us. That's the only way we can leave thisorganisation. That's the chimney over there ...' the man with grey hair pointstowards a huge picture window taking up the whole wall. *Have a good look atit.'

At the level of the ninth floor I have a panoramic view of the vast, unboundedand deserted airfield stretching to the horizon. And if I look straight down I cansee below me a labyrinth of sand-covered pathways running between thickrows of shrubs. The green of the plants in the garden and the burnt-up grass ofthe airfield are separated by an indestructible concrete wall protected by a thicknetwork of barbed wire.

That's it over there ' Grey-hair points to a fat square chimney, no more

than ten metres high, built on top of a flat asphalt roof. The black roof floatsamong the greenery of the lilac bushes like a raft in the ocean or an old-fashioned battleship, sitting low in the water with its funnel quite out ofproportion. A thin transparent smoke is rising from the chimney.

*Is that someone leaving the organisation?'

*No.' Grey-hair laughs. The chimney is not only our way out; it is also asource of energy for us and the guardian of our secrets. At the moment they aresimply burning secret papers. It's better, you know, to burn them than to keepthem. When somebody leaves the organisation the smoke is not like that; it isdense and oily. If you join the organisation you too will one day rise into the skythrough that chimney. But that's not what we're here for now. The organi-sation is giving you a last chance to change your mind, a final opportunity toconsider your choice. And to give you something to think about, I'll show you afilm. Sit down.'

He presses a knob on the control panel and sits down in an armchairalongside me. With a faint scraping noise, heavy brown shutters cover the hugewindows and immediately a picture appears on the screen without any title orother explanation. It is a black and white film, obviously old and ratherscratched. It has no sound track, and the regular cUcking noise of the projectorcan be clearly heard.

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On the screen there appears a high, gloomy room without windows,something between a factory workshop and a boiler house. In the foregroundthere is a furnace with fire-doors looking like the gates of a small castle, withgrooves running into the furnace like rails into a tunnel. People in greyprotective gowns are standing near the furnace. Boilermen. Then they showeda coffin. So this is a crematorium too. Probably the same one I have just beenlooking at out of the window. The men in gowns lift the coffin and place it onthe guide rails. The fire doors open smoothly to each side, the coffin is given agentle push and it bears its unknown occupant into the roaring flames. Thenthe camera gives a close-up of a living person. A face swimming in perspir-ation. It is probably very hot near the furnace. The face is displayed from allsides of what seems an eternity. At last the camera pulls back to show theperson full length. He is not in a gown. He is dressed in an expensive black suit,terribly crumpled. His tie is tightly screwed round his neck. The man himselfis bound fast with steel wire to a stretcher, and the stretcher has been proppedup against the wall so that the man can see the furnace.

Next all the attendants suddenly turn their attention to the bound man.Their attention obviously gives him no pleasure. He lets out a scream. Aterrible scream. There is no sound, but I can tell it is a scream that would makethe windows rattle. Four of the attendants carefully lower the stretcher to thefloor and then raise it again. The bound man makes an incredible effort toprevent this. The titanic strain is apparent in the expression on his face. A veinon his forehead stands out as though it is about to burst. But his effort to bitethe hand of an attendant is in vain. His teeth only bite into his own lip, and ablack trickle of blood begins to run down his chin. He certainly has sharpteeth. His body is firmly tied down, but it is wriggling about like that of acaptured lizard. Submitting to an animal instinct, he begins to beat his headagainst the wooden handle of the stretcher and so assist his body. He is notfighting for his life, but for an easy death. His calculation is clear: to rock thestretcher over so as to fall with it off the guide rails and onto the concrete floor.This will mean either an easy death or loss of consciousness. You don't feareven the flames if

you are imconscious. But the attendants know their job. Theysimply hold on to the handles of the stretcher to stop it rocking. And theprisoner cannot get at their hands with his teeth even if he breaks his neck.

They say that at the last moment of his life a man can perform miracles.Prompted by the instinct of self-preservation, all his muscles, all his mentaland psychological resources, all his determination to live are suddenly concen-trated into one supreme physical effort to survive. The man is making that lasteffort. He strains his whole body to try to get free. He sits like a fox which,caught in a trap, bites and tears off its own bloody paw. Even the metal guiderails begin to shake. He strains to the pjoint of breaking his own bones, andtearing his own tendons and muscles. It is a superhuman effort. But the wiredoes not give. And the stretcher slides smoothly along the rails. The furnacedoors move aside again and the fire casts a white hght on the soles of the man'sdirty patent leather shoes. He tries to bend his knees in an effort to increase the

distance between his feet and the roaring fire. But he can't. The cameramanthen shows the man's fingers in close-up. The wire has bitten deeply into them.But the tips of his fingers are free, and with them too he is trying to slow downthe movement towards the fire. His fingertips are spread out and tensed. Ifthey could only come up against something the man would certainly hold on.

Then suddenly the stretcher comes to a halt at the furnace itself. A newfigure appears on the screen dressed in a gown like the other attendants andgives them a signal with his hand. The attendants obediently remove thestretcher from the guide rails and stand it again on its handles against the wall.What is wrong? Why the hold-up? It soon becomes clear. Another coffin iswheeled into the crematorium on a low trolley. It is already nailed down andvery elegant, with a decorative fringe. It is the coffin of some highly esteemedperson. Make way for it! The attendants lift it on to the guide rails and send itoff on its last journey. Then there is an unbeUevably long wait while it isconsumed by the flames. At last it is the turn of the man bound to the stretcher,which is again placed on the rails. And once again I hear that silent screamwhich is probably enough to lift the furnace doors off their hinges. I study theman's face in the hope of finding there signs of madness. It's easier for madmenin this world. But there are no such signs on that handsome manly face. It is notdistorted by the imprint of madness. It is simply that he doesn't want to go intothe furnace and is trying somehow to make that clear. But what can he doexcept scream? So he screams. Fortunately that scream is not

recorded forposterity. Then his patent leather shoes go into the fire, and that is that. Thefire flares up. Oxygen being pumped in, no doubt. The two attendants at thefront jump away to the side, while the two at the end give the stretcher a goodpush into the depths of the furnace. The furnace doors close and the sound ofthe projector dies out.

'Who was he?' I don't really know why I ask such a question.

'He was a colonel, a former colonel. He worked in our organisation inimportant posts. But he deceived us. So he was turned out of the organisation.And he left. That's the law here. We don't force anybody to come into theorganisation. If you don't want to join you can simply refuse. But once you'vejoined you belong to the organisation lock, stock and barrel. Along with yourshoes and your tie. So there you are .... I am giving you a last opportunity tochange your mind. A minute to reflect.'

'But I don't need a minute for reflection.'

'That's the rule. Even if you don't need that minute the organisation isobliged to let you have it. So sit down and keep quiet.' Grey-hair presses aswitch and a long thin hand begins to move round the bright face of the clock.Once again I can see before me the colonel's face at the very last moment whenhis feet are already in the fire, but his head is still Hving, blood is still circulatingand his eyes still reflect the powerful intellect, the fear of death, the crueltorture and an unconquerable desire to live. If they are going to admit me intothat organisation I am ready to serve it loyally. It is a serious and powerfulorganisation, and I like their ways. But I know danmed well in advance that, if

I am to depart through the short square chimney, it will never be in a coffinwith fancy frills. That is not in my character. I am not the sort to get fancytreatment Not me.

Time's up. Do you want more time to think?'

*No.'

'Another minute?'

'No.'

*A11 right, then, captain, I have the honour to be the first to congratulate youon joining our secret brotherhood, known as the

Chief Directorate of Intelli-gence of the General Staff, or the GRU for short. The next move is for you tomeet Colonel-General Meshcheryakov, the deputy head of the GRU and to callon Colonel-General Lemzenko at the Central Committee of the Party. I thinkthey will take to you. Don't try to be too clever, although it's better on theseoccasions to ask a question than to remain silent. In the course of theexaminations and psychological tests that we set you questions sometimesseem to force themselves upon you. Don't let it worry you. Ask the question.Behave as you behaved here today and then everything will be all right. I wishyou well, captain.'

Chapter One

If you should ever think of making your career in the KGB, simply make yourway to any provincial centre. There you will be sure to find a statue of Lenin onthe main square. Behind it there will be, just as surely, a huge building with acolonnaded facade. That will be the headquarters of the regional conmiittee ofthe Communist Party. And somewhere close by you will find the regionalheadquarters of the KGB. Just ask anybody on the square: anyone will showyou. Yes, that grey, gloomy building over there, the one that Lenin is pointingat with his reinforced concrete hand.

But you don't necessarily have to apply to the regional headquarters. Youcan enquire in the 'special department' at your place of work. There tooeverybody will help you: straight along the corridor and then to the right, thedoor covered in black leather.

There are even easier ways of becoming an employee of the KGB. Just applyto the man in charge of the special department. There's one to be found inevery god-forsaken railway station and in every factory, sometimes in everyworkshop. There's one in every regiment, in every college, in every prison, inevery Party committee, in every design bureau, and masses of them in theCommunist youth movement, the trade unions, and the social organisations.Just go up to them and say: I want to join the KGB! It's another questionwhether they'll take you in or not (of course they will!). But the path to theKGB is open for everybody and there's no need at all to go looking for it.

It's by no means so easy to get into the GRU. Who do you apply to? Who doyou ask for advice? Which door do you knock at? At the police station, maybe?But the police would only shrug their shoulders: never heard of it. In Georgiathe police even issue car number plates with the letters *GRU', never suspec-ting that they could have some other, less obvious significance. A car with a*GRU' plate could travel all over the

country without causing any surprise andwithout anyone paying it special attention. For the honest citizen, as for thewhole of the Soviet poHce force, those letters mean nothing and have no specialassociations.

The KGB can count its voluntary workers in milHons. The GRU has none.That is the main difference. The GRU is entirely secret. Since nobody knowsabout it, nobody can enter it on his own initiative. Even supposing that somevolunteer were to come along, how would he set about finding the right door toknock at, to request admission? Would he be accepted? Not Hkely. Volunteersare not needed. In fact, a volunteer would be arrested at once and subjected to a

long and very painful interrogation. He would have a lot of questions toanswer. Where have you heard those three letters mentioned? How have youmanaged to find us? But most important: who helped you? Who? Who?Answer, you bastard! The GRU knows how to get the right answers out ofpeople. They'll get an answer out of anybody. I can guarantee that. Theywould inevitably discover who helped the volunteer. Then the interrogationwould begin over again. Who talked to you, you skunk, about the GRU?Where did you hear about it? Sooner or later they would get back to the originalsource. It might turn out to be someone entrusted with the secret whose tonguehad overstepped the mark. Oh, the GRU knows how to rip such tongues out! Ittears them off along with the heads. This is something that everyone who hasgot into the GRU knows very well. Anxious to save their own necks, the firstthing they ensure is that they guard their tongues. You can talk about the GRUonly inside the GRU. And you can talk only so long as your voice is not heardon the other side of the transparent walls of the building on the Khodinka.Everyone who gets into the GRU observes the law of the Aquarium, the nameby which the headquarters is known to initiates. Everything we talk aboutinside stays inside. Not a single word must go beyond the transparent walls.And since such rules exist, there are very few people outside the transparentwalls who know what goes on inside them. And since anyone who does knowkeeps his mouth shut, I personally had never heard anything about the GRU.

I was a company commander. Following our liberating campaign in Czecho-slovakia a wave of new appointments swept me up and dropped me into the318th motorised infantry division of the 13th Army of the Carpathian militarydistrict. I was put in command of the 2nd tank company in a tank battalion ofthe 910th motorised infantry regiment.

My company did not shine in performance, but it was also not reckonedamong the laggards. My life seemed to be cut out for me for many years ahead.After commanding the company I would be chief of staff of a battalion. Afterthat I should have to get myself accepted into the Malinovsky tank academy,and from there I might rise to command a battalion, then a regiment, and thenmaybe even higher. Deviations from this course might affect the speed atwhich I advanced, but not the direction. I had chosen that direction for myself,and I had no intention of changing it. But fate decided otherwise.

On 13 April 1969, at ten minutes past four in the morning, my orderly shookme gently by the shoulder and said: 'Get up, lieutenant, great deeds await you.'Then he quickly remembered that I didn't take easily to jokes on beingawakened, and in a very different tone said curtly: 'Action stations!'

It took me three and a half minutes to get myself ready: off with my blanketand on with my trousers, socks and boots. I shpped into my tunic withoutbuttoning it up-1 could do that on the move. I strapped my shoulder-belt on astight as I could, and put my officer's document case over my shoulder and my

cap on my head. I ran my hand along the peak of my cap to make sure that thehat badge was in Hne with my nose. Then off at the run. My pistol was in theregimental duty officer's room, and I grabbed it out of the huge safe near theentrance to the regimental barracks. My rucksack, greatcoat, overalls andpadded helmet were always kept in the tank. So down the stairs two at a time. Itwould have been good to get under a shower at that point, and to have run arazor over my cheeks. But there was no time. Actions stations! The snub-nosedtruck was already practically full of young officers and their even youngerorderlies. In the sky above the stars were beginning to fade. They weresneaking away quietly without saying goodbye, as people go out of our liveswhose memory disturbs us.

The tank park reverberated with the deafening roar of hundreds of engines.A grey mist and the bitter smell of the exhausts hung over everything. Then thegrowl of the tanks as they moved from their places. The grey-green monsterstrundled along the dirty concrete roadway and formed into an endless line. Atthe front the wide-bodied tanks of the reconnaissance company movedsmoothly along, followed by the armoured personnel carriers of the staff andthe signals company, then an armoured battaUon, and beyond them round thecorner three motorised infantry battalions formed into colunms, and afterthem came the regimental artillery, the anti-aircraft and anti-

tank batteries,the sappers, the chemical warfare troops and the repair units. There was noroom for the support units in the huge park. They would start to form theircolumns only after the leading units had moved far ahead.

I ran past the columns of tanks towards my own company. The regimentalchief of staff was having words with the company commanders, shouting abovethe noise of the engines. I kept running, as did the other officers. Quick was theword. There was my company. Three tanks in the first platoon, three in thesecond and another three in the third. And my tank, the conmiand tank, wasout in front. All ten were in place and I could hear the roar of my ten engines. Icould distinguish them from among the general roar. Each engine has its ownways, its own character, its own voice. Not one of them was out of tune.

Not bad for a start. When I came up to my own tank I quickened my steps,jumped smartly on to the sloping front armour plate and ran up to the turret.The hatch was open and the radio operator handed me my helmet, alreadyconnected to the communication network. The helmet transported me out ofthe world of engine roar and the growl of tanks to one of peace and quiet. Butthe headphones almost immediately came to fife, destroying the fragile illusionof tranquillity. The radio operator sitting beside me informed me of the latestinstructions (otherwise he would have had to shout into my ear). Nothing ofany importance. I cut him off with the most important question. Is it war ortraining? Goodness knows, he replied with a shrug of the shoulders.

Whatever the situation, my company was ready for battle and had to bemoved immediately out of the tank park. That was the rule. The concentrationof hundreds of tanks and vehicles in an enclosed park was the sort of target ourenemies dreamed of. I looked out in front, could hardly make anything out.

The first tank company was standing in front of me. The commander hadprobably not yet arrived. All the others ahead of me were also waiting. Ijumped up onto the top of the turret to get a better view. It looked as thoughone of the tanks in the reconnaissance company had stalled and was blockingthe way for the whole regiment. I looked at my watch. Our regimentalcommander - our lord and master - still had eight minutes left. If in eightminutes' time the regiment's columns were not on the move, the conmianderwould be cashiered and kicked out of the Army without a pension, like an olddog. But there were no signs of any tractor coming through from the repaircompany. The

whole of the central road running between the dull grey garageswas jammed full of tanks from end to end. There was a road off to the right withsome emergency gates at the end. But the road was broken by a deep trench:they had started to lay some kind of cable or pipeline and there was no waythrough.

I jumped down into the turret and at the top of my voice ordered the driver:*Left wheel and ahead!' And at the same time to the whole company: 'Do as Ido!' There was no gateway to the left. There was only a brick wall runningbetween the long blocks of repair shops. But in the command tank I had thebest driver in the company. That had long been the rule throughout the Army.I shouted at him over the intercom: Tou're the best in the company! I choseyou, you scoundrel. I conferred on you, you rascal, the highest honour - to carefor and cherish the command tank. Don't disgrace your commander's choice! Or I'll flatten you and let you rot!'

My driver didn't have a chance to reply. Over a very short stretch of groundhe whipped our armoured dinosaur up to a breakneck pace, changing gear atlightning speed. The body shook, the engine screamed. There was a terrifyingshock as the tank hit the brick wall. Everything we had in the tank shudderedand began to rattle and squeak. The bricks descended in an avalanche on to thearmour plate, wrecking the headlights, and aerials, ripping off boxes of spareinstruments and denting the external spare fuel tanks. But my tank let out aroar and, wrapped in a web of barbed wire, burst its way out of a cloud of brickdust into the sleepy side street of a peaceful Ukrainian town. I looked outthrough the rear porthole and saw my tanks cheerfully passing through the gapbehind me. The tank park's duty officer was running towards the gap in thewall, waving his hands and shouting something. It was like a silent film: youcould only guess by his gestures what he was saying. His mouth was wide open,but you couldn't possibly hear what he was shouting. I guessed he was cursing.They were exceedingly vulgar gestures. No mistake about it.

When the tenth tank of my company had passed through the gap, the trafficcontrol appeared: black uniforms with white belts and helmets. They wouldbring order into the situation. They knew who to let through first. Reconnais-sance units first. Every regiment has its special reconnaissance company withspecial equipment and special troops and officers. But apart from that everymotorised infantry and tank battalion in a regiment has another speciallytrained company which does not have special equipment or special troops but

which can also be used for carrying out reconnaissance. These companies haveto be allowed to go ahead. Come on, you white-helmeted boys, let us get on themove! We've got to be out there in front.

To an outsider all the companies in a division or a regiment look exactly thesame. But they're not. The first company in every battalion really is the first.However many poor quality soldiers there are in a battalion, the conunandermakes sure that everything and everybody of the best goes into the firstcompany. And if there's a shortage of officers the fresh intake has to be given tothe first company. Because the first company always forms the main axis of thebattalion. It is the first to clash with the enemy head-on. And a great dealdepends on how the first move in a battle is engaged and on its outcome.

The second company in any battahon is usually mediocre. The officers insecond companies are without any special distinction, like me, and so are thetroops. But every second company has additional reconnaissance training. Ithas a sort of second profession. It is primarily a fighting unit, but in case ofneed it can carry out reconnaissance on behalf of its battalion, and can evenserve the regiment by replacing or supplementing the special reconnaissancecompany.

There are in the Soviet Army 2,400 motorised infantry and tank battalions,and each of them has a third company which is third not only in order. Thepeople who serve in third companies are usually those who did not get intoeither the first or the second companies: very young and inexperienced officersor those who have been passed over and have little future. There is always ashortage of soldiers in the third companies. In fact, the overwhelming majorityof third companies don't have any soldiers at all. Their battle equipment iskept permanently in mothballs. If war breaks out thousands of such companieswill immediately be reinforced by the call-up of reservists and will quicklyreach the level of normal fighting units. There is profound good sense in thissystem: to add reservists to an existing division is a thousand times better thanforming new divisions wholly from reservists.

My second tank company continued to advance at top speed. As we weremaking the turn I looked back and counted the tanks. So far they were allkeeping up with us. Close on the tail of the last tank of my company, makingthe sparks fly off the concrete, was a tracked personnel carrier with a Httlewhite flag. That was a great relief for me. The little white flag meant that therewere umpires present. And

that in turn meant that we were on manoeuvres andwere not going to war. So we could Hve another day.

A military helicopter - a 'dragonfly' - appeared right above my head, lostheight and swung round into the wind to hold its position. It hovered to theright of me. I stood on the turret cover with my right hand above my head. Thepilot was a real redhead, with a face like a magpie's egg, covered with freckles.His white teeth gleamed as he smiled down at me. He knew, that man in the

chopper, that the commanders to whom he was transmitting orders were notgoing to have the best of days. The hehcopter suddenly shot upwards andaway, the red-headed pilot still grinning, his teeth still reflecting the Ught of therising sun.

My broad-fronted tank was cutting a path through everything that came in itsway. Branches and undergrowth flew in all directions. The row inside the tankwas hellish. The whole machine roared like a raging ocean, prancing about likea fury. I had my map on my knees, and the situation was fairly clear to me. Awhole division had been thrown into the breach and was advancing atbreakneck speed westwards. But it was not clear where the enemy was. Themap was no use there. For that reason twenty companies were rushing ahead ofthe division, mine among them. These companies were like the fingers of ahand spread out, and their task was to detect the most vulnerable place in theenemy's defences, into which the divisional conmiander would thrust histhousand-ton fist. The enemy's weak spot had to be sought for over vast areas,and consequently each of the companies sent ahead operated entirely on itsown. I knew that other companies like mine were also racing forward alongsideme but avoiding centres of resistance in villages and towns. My company alsotook care to avoid getting involved in exhausting clashes. If it came upon theenemy it simply informed the staff, dodged round him as fast as possible andmoved on ahead. Meanwhile, somewhere behind, our main force was movinglike a roaring river bursting through a dam. Forward, my boys, forward.Westwards!

The personnel carrier with the white flag was not dropping behind. Thedamned thing had only half the weight of a tank but practically the sameenormous horse-power. Twice I tried to break away from it, on the groundsthat high speed is a guarantee of victory. But it didn't come off. When I was incommand of a platoon such tricks were perfectly pK)ssible, but not with acompany. It would only break up the column and get the tanks stranded in themarshes, which would not get you any sympathy. It would certainly get yourelieved of your

company, however. To hell with the umpires, I thought, letthem observe us to their heart's content; I'm not going to let the company getspread out.

There's a crane ahead ...' came a call from the commander of the sixthtank, sent ahead.

A crane? A lifting crane? Yes! A crane! A beautiful green crane, allcamouflaged with tree branches. When do you ever come across a crane on abattlefield? Of course! With a missile battery! You don't get a bit of luck Ukethat every day!

'Company,' I shouted. 'A missile battery Into action .... Advance!'

My lads already know exactly how to deal with missile batteries. The firstplatoon overtook me and spread out in battle formation. The second platoon

accelerated violently and took off to the right, its tracks spraying mud in alldirections. The third platoon turned off to the left and in a wide sweep attackedthe battery from the flank.

Tull speed ahead/ I shouted. But the drivers knew what was neededwithout my telling them. Every driver now had his foot hard down on thearmour-plated floor, pressing the pedal to its limit, making the engines screamas if they were out of control. Hence the noise and the clouds of smoke: the fueldidn't have time to burn up completely in the motors, so it came belching thickand oily, out of the exhausts.

ˆReconnaissance ... completed ... square 13-41 ... initial position ... am

going into action ' That was my radio-operator-gun-loader sending what

might well be our last message over the air. Missile units and enemy staffs hadto be attacked as soon as they were met, without any conmiands being issued,whatever the chances of success and whatever the cost.

The gun-loader switched off the intercom and thrust the first shell into thecarriage. It slid smoothly into the breech and a powerful breech block closedthe barrel with a heart-rending shock, like the blade of a guillotine. The turretswung round to one side, and beneath my feet I

caught a glimpse of thedriver-mechanic and the stock of shells. With a shudder the breech of the gunswung upwards. The gun-layer gripped the firing console with both hands,and the powerful stabiHsers, obeying his horny hands, controlled the gun andthe turret in short sharp movements, preventing them from repeating the wilddance of the tank which seemed to have gone mad as it flew over tree-trunksand branches. With the thumb of his right hand the gun-layer pressed firmlyon the trigger. So that the noise should not be transmitted to our ears withoutwarning, there was a sharp click in the headphones, making our eardrumscontract ahead of the great shock as the mighty gun fired. The click in ourhelmets came only hundredths of a second before the shot, so that we did nothear the shot itself.

The forty-ton hulk of our tank shuddered as it raced ahead. Thegun-barrel sprang back and threw out the ringing, smoking shell-case. Andimmediately, following the example of the commander's gun, all the othersstarted to bark in rapid succession. Meanwhile my gun-layer had already put asecond shell in the carriage.

'Full speed ahead,' I shouted again.

The tank-tracks were throwing up fountains of mud, and the crunch of thetracks was louder even than the gunfire. Then a click in the helmet headphonestold us that the gun-layer was about to press the trigger again. Once again wedid not hear the sound of our own shot. We only saw the barrel spring back andheard the shell case make its frightening clang as it hit the baffle plate. Wecould hear the firing only of the guns of the tanks nearby. And they could hearours. This shellfire whipped my valiant Asians into a fury. They became Hkewild beasts. I knew every single one of them. In the fifth tank, in betweenshots, the gun-layer was gnawing at the rubber strap on the sight out of sheerdehght. Everybody knew this, not only in the company but in the battalion

too. It was bad, that: it diverted attention from observing the situation. He hadalmost been transferred to the gun-loaders for that. But he was a very goodshot, the scoundrel. In the eighth tank the commander always took an axe withhim so that whenever his gun got choked through rapid firing he could bringthe axe-head down on the armour plating. On our last sortie, the commander ofthe third tank had switched on his radio transmitter and forgotten to switch itoff, ruining communications throughout the company. The whole companycould hear him grinding his teeth and howling like a wolf.

'Hit 'em for six!' I said quietly. But my whisper was carried thirty kilometresby radio, as though I was whispering the words into the ear of every one of mydear ferocious Asians. And they understood. Their Russian was terrible, butthey understood 'Hit 'em.'

Another click in our ears and another shell case clattered out. The smell ofthe expended shells made your head spin. The poisonous smell had a powerful,brutalising effect. My soldiers were intoxicated by the deafening noise, thepower of their motors and the rattle of the machine-gun fire. No force in theworld could hold them back now. All the drivers were behaving as though theyhad just been slipped off a leash. They yanked the driving levers with theirgreat coarse hands, manhandled their machines and drove them straight intothe heat of battle. Meanwhile I looked back, to make sure we were not beingovertaken. Far away in the rear was the transporter with the white flag. It haddropped back, fallen by the wayside. I was sorry for the people in it: they hadno powerful gun, no deafening noise, no intoxicating smells. They got nopleasure from life, didn't know what it was. That was why their driver was socowardly, carefully dodging stones and tree trunks. But there was no need tobe afraid. You had to grab the machine with both hands, take it and throw itabout. An armour-plated tank is a gentle thing. But if it feels that it is beingridden by a really strong man it will go wild too. It will take you at the gallopover granite boulders, trunks of ancient oaks, through craters and ditches.Don't worry about ripping off the tracks or breaking a shaft. Just give it allyou've got and it will sweep you along like a bird. A tank simply revels inbattle: that is what it's made for. Onwards!

'Take your company out of the battle line ...'

Sparks flew from under the tank tracks. The company rushed down on thedefences of the missile battery. There was a crunching noise in my ears: eitherthe tracks going across a steel plate or the gun-layer's teeth grinding in myheadphones.

'... take your company out of the battle line ...'

So as not to find themselves firing at each other, without further orders thetanks ceased fire and just went on growling like wolves tearing a deer to pieces.They were going head-on with their armoured breastplates into the fragilemissile transporters and the cranes on the launch pads and were pushing thepride and glory of the missile artillery into the sticky black earth. Full speedahead!

'... take your company out of the battle line ...'

12

Once again I could hear somebody's distant squeaky voice and suddenly Irealised that it was addressed to me. Damn! Who on earth, at such a moment ofsupreme, and almost sexual bliss, would want to drag people away from theirfavourite occupation? That blasted observer would make my stallionsimpotent! Who gave him the right to ruin a first-class tank company? Anenemy of the people or a bourgeois saboteur? To hell with him!

'Company - full speed ahead!'

Then, banging my fist on the armour-plate and hurling into the air curses onthe whole gang of staff officers who had never in their offices had the smell ofpowder in their nostrils, I gave the order:

'Company - break away! Left wheel into the meadow in platoons!'

My driver angrily pulled the left lever right over, nearly turning the heavytank over on its right side and destroying a beautiful silver birch. Then heskilfully changed gears, put the tank quickly into top gear and sent it rushingthrough the bushes and over deep holes towards the meadow. Having swungthe tank right round, he dropped the engine speed to a minimum so that itstood quietly in place, far ahead of the others, like an aircraft which has brakedsuddenly at the end of a runway. With a roar of disappointment the rest of thetanks thrust their way one after the other out of the forest and, breakingconvulsively, formed up in a straight line.

'Disarm! Guns open for inspection!' I gave the order and then ripped theplug of the headphones out of its socket. The gun-layer cut off the intercom.

The APC with the group of observers had fallen a long way behind. While itwas trying to catch up with us I had time to check the equipment, to receive areport on the state of the tanks and the quantity of fuel and ammunition thathad been used, and to draw up the company and hold it in the middle of themeadow ready to make my report. As we stood there I worked out in my mindthe pluses and minuses, what I might be praised for and what punished. Thecompany had started to leave the tank park eight minutes before its set time,and that was praiseworthy, something for which a company conunander mightsometimes be slipped a gold watch. At the beginning of a war they reckon inseconds. All tanks, all aircraft and

all staff headquarters have to get out ofdanger at top speed, so that the enemy's first terrible blow is delivered ondeserted military camps. Eight minutes! Definitely a plus for me. All my tankswere in good shape and had remained so throughout the morning. That was aplus for my technical deputy. It was a pity that, due to the shortage of officers, Ihad no technical deputy: I had to do his work. We had avoided the strongholdsin swift manoeuvres and had reported on them in good time and precisely.That was a plus for the commander of the first platoon. It was a pity that wedidn't have one: again the shortage. We had not missed the missile battery, wehad sniffed it out and flattened it into the ground. And a missile battery, eventhe most broken-down one, could produce a couple of Hiroshimas. But, by

stopping reconnaissance and throwing my boxes of metal against the missiles, Ihad averted those Hiroshimas. For such action in a war they pin a very bigmedal on your chest and refer to it approvingly at lectures for a long timeafterwards.

At last the observer, a colonel, appeared. Hands white and spotlessly clean,boots glistening in the sun. With a look of distaste on his face he picked his waycarefully, hke a cat, round the puddles. The regimental commander, our chief,was also a colonel, only his huge hands were callused and obviously accus-tomed to hard work. His face was burnt brown with exposure to the frost, thesun and the winds of all the training grounds and ranges that I knew, unlike thepale features of the observing officer.

'Straighten up! Easy! Dressing by the right!'

But the colonel paid no heed to my report, cutting me off in the middle of aword: 'You have fun, don't you, lieutenant, in action! Like a httle boy!'

I remained silent, smiling at him. He didn't seem to be finding fault with me;more like giving me a medal. But my smile seemed to make him even fiercer.The officers accompanying him remained grimly silent. They knew thatClause 97 of the Disciplinary Code did not permit him to criticise me in thepresence of my subordinates. The majors and heutenant-colonels knew that,by criticising me in the presence of my subordinates, the colonel was under-mining not only my authority as a commander but the authority of the wholeofficer contingent of the glorious Soviet Army, including his own authority as acolonel. I seemed to be in the clear. So I went on smiling.

*It is quite disgraceful, senior heutenant, not to hear orders and not to carrythem out.'

My dear idiot colonel, I thought to myself, I would hang people who do notenjoy themselves in action and who are not intoxicated by the smell of blood -hang them on the gun barrels. This was just training, but if in a real battle thetracks of our tanks were spattered with real blood and not make-believe myAsians would have become even more excited. That was not a sign ofweakness. That was their strength. Nobody in the world would be able to stopthem.

'And then there's the wall! You knocked down the wall of the park! That's aserious offence!'

I had forgotten altogether about the wall. Big deal. It had probably alreadybeen rebuilt. Wouldn't take long. They only had to get ten prisoners from theglasshouse and they'd put a new wall up in a couple of hours. And how, mydear colonel, was I to know whether it was just an exercise or the real thing?And if it was war and the wall had remained standing, and 2000 men andhundreds of first-class fighting vehicles had been destroyed in one group? Eh,colonel? You have a big title, you are known as the Chief of Intelligence of the13th Army, so just enquire how many targets my Uzbeks discovered in one day.They don't even speak Russian properly, but they know perfectly how to seekout targets. Praise them, colonel! Never mind about me, but give them a smile.And I kept smiling at him. I was standing with my back to the company and I

could not possibly turn to look at them. But I knew very well that my wholecompany was smiling. Simply smiling, without any special reason. That's whatthey were like, ready to display their teeth in any circumstances.

The colonel was not pleased. He probably thought we were laughing at him.It made him furious. He ground his teeth, like the gun-layer in action. He wasnot capable of understanding or assessing our smiles. So he bawled straight atme:

Toung man, you are not fit to command a company. I am removing you.Hand your company over to your deputy and have him take the company backto barracks!'

*I don't have a deputy at the moment,' I told him, smiling.

Then hand over to the commander of the first platoon!'

There isn't one.' And, to save the colonel going through all the lower rankcommanders, I explained: 'I am the only officer in the company.'

The colonel calmed down. All the fire went out of him, as though it hadnever been. The situation in which there is only one officer in a company is, inour Army, especially within the territory of the Soviet Union, practicallyuniversal. There are plenty of people who want to be officers, but they all wantto be colonels. Very few are attracted by the idea of going in as a lieutenant.That's why there is a shortage at the lower end. There is a cruel shortage ofofficers. But people seem to forget about this at the top, in the headquartersstaffs. That's why it didn't occur to the colonel that I could be the only officerin the whole company. He had removed me from my command, as he had aright to do. But the company had to be returned to barracks. And it wasimpossible to send a company, especially a tank company, dozens of kilo-metres without any officers. That was an offence. It would probably beregarded as an attempt at a coup d'etat. So it was up to the colonel to take thefatal decision. Having removed a commander in circumstances where he hadno deputy, he had taken personal responsibility for the company, and did nothave the right to entrust the company to anyone else. If such a right weregranted then every divisional commander could lead his troops out into thefield, remove the commanders and replace them by others to suit his taste.Thus a coup could be carried out. But we don't have coups, because by nomeans everyone is permitted to handle the delicate question of selecting andappointing key people. He had the right to dismiss people. To dismiss is easy.Everyone had the right to dismiss people. It was easy as kilhng a man. But torestore commanders to their posts is as difficult as returning a dead man to life.Well, colonel, I said to myself, do you think you can put me in charge of thecompany again? It won't work. I am not worthy. Everybody heard you saythat. You don't have the right to put an unworthy man in charge of a company.And what if your superiors get to know that, close to the state frontier, youwere removing properly appointed conmianders from tank companies andputting unworthy officers in their place? What would happen to you?

At this point it would have suited the colonel to get in touch with thecommander of my battalion or regiment and ask him to take over his

delinquent company. But the exercises were over. They had ended as suddenlyas they had begun. Who would allow wartime communications to be used afterthe exercises were over? Officers who took such liberties in 1937 were shot.After that, no one was likely to get up to such tricks. So what about it colonel?Go on, take command of the company. But perhaps you've already forgottenhow to lead a company? Maybe you've never led one? A whole career in staffjobs. There are plenty of such colonels. Every other job appears quite trifling.There doesn't seem to be anything very comphcated about leading a tankcompany. But the commands have to be given as laid down in the newregulations. The men in the company are not Russians, they won't understandotherwise. Even worse if they misunderstand a command. Then your searchtroops will never find them, even with a hehcopter over the forests andmarshes. A tank is a heavy thing: it can run over a man, run off a bridge or sinkin a bog. And the commander's come-uppance is always the same.

I was no longer smiling. The situation was serious and there was nothing tolaugh about. I would have liked at that moment to have saluted smartly andsaid: 'May I be dismissed, comrade colonel?' After all, I had no status; I wasneither a commander nor a subordinate. He had got himself into a mess and itwas up to him to get himself out. He had wanted to take command, so let himcommand. But the pleasure of seeing him in a tough spot soon faded in me. Itwas my very own company, my men and my machines. I was no longerresponsible for the company, but I wasn't going to drop it just like that.

'Permit me, comrade colonel,' I said, saluting smartly. 'Allow me to lead thecompany for the last time. A sort of farewell to it.'

'Yes,' he said, curtly. For a moment it seemed to me as though out of habithe was going to give me the usual advice - don't go too fast, don't play about,don't let the column get spread out. But he didn't.

'Yes, yes, you lead the company. Consider my order not having come intoforce. Take the company to barracks and hand it over there.'

'Very good!' I turned about sharply, but not without noticing the smiles onthe faces of the colonel's suite. What on earth was that: taking command for thetime being? His officers knew very well that there was no such order as'command for the time being'. An officer was either worthy of commanding hisunit and was entirely responsible for it, or he was not worthy and was removedimmediately. To command for the time being - that was not a solution. Hishandling of the situation might cost the colonel dear. That was clear to me,

andto his officers. But I hadn't time to bother with it for the moment. I had aserious matter on hand. I was commanding the company. And I couldn't careless who thought what, who did what or who was going to be punished for it.

Before he gives the first command a commander has to assert his authorityover his unit. He has to cast his eye over his troops in such a way that a slightmovement runs through the ranks which freezes into silence, when everyone isaware that the commander's orders are about to follow. But in tank troopscommands are given in silence. There were two flags in my hands. I gave myorders with them.

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I held up the white flag. That was my first command. With that short sharpgesture I was in fact conveying a quite long message to my company: 'I am nowin command of the company! I forbid all transmissions by radio until we meetthe enemy. Attention.' There are preliminary commands and executivecommands. With a preliminary command an officer is, so to speak, taking holdof his subordinates with the reins of his own will. Then, having tightened thereins, the commander has to wait five seconds before giving the maincommand. His formation has to freeze in expectation, each man straining atthe metal bit, quivering slightly, muscles flinching as if before a sharp blow,everyone awaiting the executive command as a good horse expects the whip.

I raised the red flag and then dropped both of them to my sides together. Thecompany burst into life, broke formation and began to clatter with the sound ofheavy boots on the armour-plate.

Maybe it was because the company was taking leave of me, or because theywanted to demonstrate their skills to the observers, or because they were justfeeling angry and had no other way of expressing their anger. If only I hadswitched on a stop-watch! But even without it I knew immediately that mycompany was breaking the record for the division and perhaps doing evenbetter than that. I knew that there were many genuine tank officers accom-panying the colonel and that every one of them was admiring my Asians. I hadseen a lot of records broken by tank units and I knew what they were worth. Ihad also seen hands broken and teeth knocked out. But all was going well formy lads at that moment. And I seemed to know in advance that not one of themwould stumble or slip as he leapt into the hatch. I knew that nobody was goingto get his fingers crushed by the Hd. Not on this occasion.

Ten engines started to whine in harmony. I climbed into the commandhatch. Now the white flag held high in my hand meant: *I am ready!' Nine flagswent up in reply: 'Ready! Ready! Ready!' I swept the flag in a circle above myhead and then pointed clearly to the east: Tollow me!' And that was all.Elementary. Primitive? Yes. But there is no form of radio reconnaissance thatcan detect even four tank armies moving off at the same time. And againstother forms of detection there are equally primitive but effective devices. Thatis why we always turn up unexpectedly. We may make the right or the wrongmove, but it's always unexpected. Even in Czechoslovakia, even with sevenarmies at once.

The colonel-observer scrambled up onto his personnel carrier, his officersafter him. The machine roared into life, made a sharp turn and set off for thecamp by another route.

The colonel's suite of officers obviously loathed him. Otherwise they wouldhave suggested that he ought to follow immediately behind my tank. After all,I was now a nobody, an impostor. To entrust the company to me was like apolice chief entrusting a policeman he had dismissed with the arrest of a majorcriminal. Having had such an idea, he should at least have remained alongside,ready to intervene. Having handed the company over to someone else becauseyou can't lead it yourself, you should at least stay near to step on the brakes if

need be. But no one had pointed out to the colonel that he had put his Ufe intothe hands of a young senior lieutenant. And a senior Ueutenant who had beenrelieved of his command could play all sorts of dirty tricks, since he no longerbelonged to the company. The colonel would have to carry the can. Perhaps hisofficers were confident that the senior Ueutenant would bring the companyback without any accidents, that he would not ruin the colonel's future. But hecould have done.

It often happens that a division is whipped into action with an emergencyalarm, rushes out into the fields and is then returned home. It makes very goodsense. It becomes a habit. It means that when the division sets out on the realthing it acts as if it were going on maneouvres, without over-excitement. At thesame time the enemy becomes less vigilant. Soviet divisions frequently burstout of their camps unexpectedly. So the enemy ceases to react.

The roads were jammed with tank columns. The order to withdraw

hadobviously been given to the whole division simultaneously. Who could tell howmany divisions had been called into action by the alarm and how many werenow making their way back to camp! Maybe just one division, maybe three,maybe five. For all we knew as many as a hundred divisions could have beenactivated at the same time.

A band was blaring forth at the entrance to the camp.

The officer commanding our regiment was standing on a tank, welcominghis columns back. He had an experienced eye, quick to detect faults. A singleglance was sufficient for him to form an opinion of a company, a battery, abattalion, all their commanders. The officers shrank under their master'sleaden gaze. He was a big fine-looking man, his shoulder belt done up on thelast holes, barely coming together. The upper part of his enormous boots wereslit open a little to enable him to pull them over his mighty calves. He had a fistas big as a kettle, and he was waving to someone with it. Probably at thecommander of the third motorised infantry battafion whose armoured person-nel carriers were just making their way through the gates. Next came themortar battery from that battalion and then it was my turn. And although Iknew that all my tanks were following behind me, and although it was now allthe same to me whether they were coming or not, since I was no longer incommand, I still looked round at the very last moment. Yes, they were allthere. Not one had dropped back. So I quickly faced forward again andbrought my right hand quickly up to my helmet; the commanders of the othernine tanks repeated the greeting.

The regimental commander was still shouting something offensive andthreatening at the column of the third battalion. At last he directed a ferociouslook at my company. Who could withstand such a look, the look of a gorilla inthe jungle or a Cossack bandit in the steppes? As my eyes caught his I suddenlyand to my own surprise decided to look at him straight. And he opened his

hand and brought the wide spade-like palm up to his cap-peak. I had notexpected that. I looked blank for a moment, then blinked my eyes. My tankhad already gone past him, but I swung my head round and looked at thecommander. Suddenly he smiled at me. His face was so swarthy that hiswhite-toothed smile was visible to my whole company and probably also to thehowitzer battery which was behind me and which he was about to greet.

You do not realise, commander, I said to myself, that I'm no longer incharge of the company. I have been dismissed. Dismissed in disgrace. A sort ofpublic reproach. That, commander, is nothing. Do you think Vm going to cry?Never in my life. I shall be smiling. Always. To spite everybody. I shall smilehappily and proudly, just as I am smiling at you now, commander. I shall soonget a new company. There's a shortage of officers, as you well know. Only it's apity to have to part from my Asians. We managed to get together a veryfriendly bunch of lads. But we shall survive. As far as I am concerned it isenough that the regiment was on the move in good time and that you, mycommander, have not been dismissed from the regiment. Stand there and takethe salute with your great fist. That's your job. We don't need any othercommander in this regiment. We can forgive you your tough ways. And if needbe we will follow you wherever you lead us. I too will follow you in command, ifnot of a company, then of a platoon. Or even as a simple gun-layer.

When a combat vehicle returns to its park, what is the first thing that has to bedone? Of course. It has to be refuelled. Whether it is in good order or bad, itmust be full of fuel. Who can tell when the next alarm will hit us? Every combatvehicle must be ready to repeat the exercise from the beginning at a moment'snotice. For that reason the tank park was again full of noise. Hundreds ofvehicles were being refuelled. Every tank needed a minimum of a ton of fuel.The APCs are also very thirsty and so are the artillery tractors. All the transportvehicles had to be filled up. At the same time the fighting vehicles had to havetheir ammunition replenished. Each tank shell weighs 30 kilograms. Hundreds of them were brought up, two shells to a box. Each box had to be takenoff its transport, the shells taken out and the packing removed from each one.Then each one had to be cleaned, the factory's protective grease removed, andthe shell placed in the tank. Cartridges also came in boxes, 880 to a box, andthey had to be loaded into belts. In each machine-gun belt there were 250rounds. The belts had to be loaded into their magazines, and there werethirteen of them in every tank. Then all the empty shell cases had to be pickedup, and put in boxes and handed in to the stores. Gun barrels would be cleanedlater. Each tank's gun barrel in turn was polished for several hours a day andfor several days in a row. But for the moment the barrels had only to be oiled.Then the tanks had to be washed down: a rough clean-up now and a thoroughwash and clean later. Next the troops had to be fed. They had had no mid-daymeal, so that they would have lunch and supper together. After supper

everybody would be put on to servicing the vehicles. Everything had to bechecked by the morning: motors, transmissions, suspensions and tracks.Where necessary the tracks would be replaced. In the fourth tank the torsionbar was broken on the left side. On the eighth the reduction gear was out oforder. In the first tank company two motors had to be changed at once. Earlythe next morning the business of cleaning the barrels would begin. Everythingmust be in good order! Full speed! But then suddenly I had an empty feeling inmy heart. I remembered that it would not be my job next morning to check onthe servicing in my company. Tomorrow they might not even let me into thetank park. I knew that all the documents on my case had already been preparedand that I would be dismissed officially that same evening, not the nextmorning. I also knew that it was laid down that an officer should appear for hisdismissal as smartly turned-out as he would to receive a decoration. Mycompany knew that too. For that reason, while I was having words with themen filling the tanks, while I was checking the reports on ammunition used,and while I was crawling under tank number three, someone else was alreadyputting a mirror polish on my boots, pressing my trousers and sewing a cleancollar into my tunic. I got out of my dirty overalls and stepped quickly under ashower. Then I shaved carefully and slowly. At that moment an orderly arrivedfrom regimental headquarters.

The park still resounded with noise. A tractor was hauling a damagedtransporter through the gates. There was the clang of empty shell cases. Thehuge *Urar lorries rumbled along loaded to the top with empty shell boxes. Anelectric welder was throwing up a firework display of sparks. By morningeverything would be dazzlingly bright. For the moment there was nothing butmud, mud all around, noise and din, as on a big construction site. There wasnothing to distinguish officers from soldiers. They were all in overalls, all filthyand all cursing. Through all this chaos came Senior Lieutenant Suvorov, theofficer thinking about his career, his uniform pressed to perfection, with everybutton gleaming. The grease-stained tankmen stared after me. Everybodycould see that the senior lieutenant was on his way to be dismissed. Nobodyknew why he had been removed. On another occasion the senior lieutenantwould not have been noticed by the other companies or, if they had noticed,they would have pretended not to. They would have fiddled about in theirengines, sticking out their greasy backsides. But this man was on his way to bedismissed. So tankmen from other companies, unknown to me, raised theirdirty hands to their grimy caps to greet me. And I returned their greeting andsmiled at them. They smiled back as if to say: it could be worse, don't give in.

Outside the walls of the tank park was a whole military camp, surrounded bythree rows of chestnut trees. Some new recruits were singing very loudly butnot very harmoniously. They were doing their best but were still not in tune. Avery keen corporal was shouting at them. Then the recruits saluted me. Theywere still very raw and understood nothing. For them a senior lieutenant was avery important figure, even higher than their corporal. With boots that seemedto have a very special shine on them: probably on his way to some celebration.

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I reached the headquarters building, where all was clean and quiet. Thestairs were of marble, built by the Rumanians before the war. All the corridorswere carpeted. I came to a semi-oval room brightly lit. In a transparentbullet-proof cone sealed with a crest was the regimental standard. Beneath thestandard a soldier stood on guard. His short flat bayonet split up the last rays ofthe sun and scattered them in flashes of hght on the marble. I saluted theregimental standard and an orderly saluted me. But the man on guard did notstir. Because he was holding a sub-machine gun, and a man bearing arms doesnot have to use any other form of greeting. His weapon is his greeting toeverybody.

The orderly led me down the corridor straight to the office of the regimentalcommander. Strange. Why not to the chief of staff? The orderly knocked onthe commanding officer's door, entered and closed the door firmly behind him.He came out again at once and stood aside, indicating that I was to enter.

A lieutenant-colonel of medium height whom I did not know was sitting atthe commander's oak desk. I had caught sight of him among the officersaccompanying the umpire that day. Who on earth could he be? Where was ourcommanding officer, where was the chief of staff? And why was a lieutenant-colonel sitting at the commanding officer's desk? Surely he wasn't a moreimportant officer than our commander? But of course, he must be moreimportant, otherwise he would not be sitting at that desk.

'Sit down, senior lieutenant,' the lieutenant-colonel said without waiting forany greeting from me.

I sat down, on the very edge of the chair. I knew that there would be sometough talk to follow and that I would have to jump to my feet. So I kept myback dead straight, as though I were on parade.

Tell me, senior lieutennant, why did you smile when Colonel Yermolayevrelieved you of command of the company?'

The lieutenant-colonel's eyes drilled right into me, as if to say: You'd bettertell the truth - I can see right through you. I looked at him and the freshlylaundered collar on his worn but clean and well-pressed tunic. What was I toreply?

T don't know, comrade lieutenant-colonel.'

'You were sorry to leave the company?'

'Yes.'

'Your company performed with great skill. Especially at the very end. As forthe wall, everybody agrees that it was better to knock it down than to exposethe whole regiment to attack. It is not difficult to rebuild a wall '

'It has already been rebuilt.'

'So Hsten to me, senior lieutenant. I am Lieutenant-Colonel Kravtsov and Iam Chief of Intelligence of the 13th Army. Colonel Yermolayev, who removedyou from the company, thinks he is Chief of IntelUgence, but he has beenrelieved of his post although he does not know about it yet. I have already beenappointed in his place. We are now going round the divisions. He thinks he iscarrying out an inspection, but in fact I am handling all the material and getting

to know about the state of intelligence work in the divisions. None of hisdecisions or orders has any force. He issues instructions every day, but in theevening I submit my papers to the regimental and divisional commanders andall his orders are annulled. He has no idea that this is happening. He doesn'trealise that his shout is no more than a rustling in the forest. As far as the SovietArmy and our whole State are concerned he is already a zero, a private person,a failure expelled from the army without a pension. There will shortly be anannouncement to that effect. So his order reheving you of your company has noforce.'

Thank you very much, comrade lieutenant-colonel!'

'Don't be in too much of a hurry to thank me. He does not have the right toremove you from command of the company. Therefore / am

removing you.'And, with a change of tone he said, quietly but with authority: 'I order you tohand over your company!'

I have long been in the habit of meeting the hard blows of fate with a smile.But this blow was so sudden that I couldn't raise a smile. I stood up, salutedand barked out:

'Very good! I am to hand over the company.'

'Sit down.'

I sat.

There is a difference. Colonel Yermolayev removed you because he con-sidered a company was too much for you. I am removing you because acompany is too httle for you. I have a job for you: chief of staff of the division'sreconnaissance battalion.'

'But I am only a senior heutenant.'

'I am also only a heutenant-colonel. But I have been selected and ordered totake over the intelligence work for the whole Army. I am now not only takingover my job; I am also forming my team. Some people I have brought alongwith me from my previous job. I was Chief of Reconnaissance of the 87thdivision. But I am now responsible for a field of activity many times bigger andI need a lot of intelligent and capable men on whom I can depend. Theheadquarters of the reconnaissance battalion is the least I can offer you. I shallalso try you out in a more important job. That's if you cope ....' He looked athis watch. 'You've got twenty minutes to get your things together. At 21.30our bus leaves for Rovno and the headquarters of the 13th Army. You have aseat reserved on it. I'll take you onto my staff in the intelligence department atthe headquarters of the 13th Army if you pass the examinations tomorrow.'

I passed the examinations.

Chapter Two

It was two hundred and forty paces from the officers' quarters to theheadquarters of the 13th Army. Every morning I walked slowly past the rowsof old maple trees and the empty green benches till I reached a tall brick wall.On the other side of the wall in a well-planted garden stood a mansion whichhad once, a long time ago, been

the home of a rich man. He had of course beenmurdered, because it wasn't fair that some people should have big houses whileothers had little ones. Before the war the mansion had housed the NKVD, andduring the war the Gestapo. It was a very convenient place for them. After thewar the house was taken over by the headquarters of one of our numerousarmies. That was where I was now serving.

A headquarters is a place where power is concentrated - brutal, inexorable,unyielding power. By comparison with any of our enemies our headquartersare very small and extremely mobile. The staff of an Army consists of seventygenerals and officers and a security company. And that's all. No bureaucracy.The staff of an Army must be ready at any moment to get aboard ten armouredpersonnel carriers and disperse into the grey-green mass of their subordinatetroops without losing control of them. It is this invisibility and mobility thatmakes it invulnerable. But even in peacetime it is protected against anyaccidents. The first owner of the house had surrounded it and its big gardenwith a high brick wall, and all subsequent owners had strengthened the wall,making it higher and adding all sorts of defences to it, to discourage peoplefrom the sUghtest desire to climb it.

A guard stood at the green gate and I showed him my pass. He studied itcarefully and then saluted: please enter. The building itself was not visiblefrom the checkpoint. There was a pathway leading to it between walls of thickbushes. You couldn't leave the pathway, because in the bushes was animpassable network of barbed wire. The pathway was like a tunnel whichturned gradually in the direction of the house, hidden among the chestnuts.The windows of the ground floor had been walled up many years previously.The windows of the first floor were protected by strong ironwork on theoutside and solid shutters within. The driveway in front of the main entrancewas paved with clean white paving stones and surrounded by thick hedges. Ifyou looked carefully you could see in the bushes, as well as the barbed wire,some grey, rough concrete. These were the machine-gun casemates, connectedby underground tunnels with the basement of the staff building where theguard was posted.

From here, from the main courtyard, a pathway led around the house to anew three-storey block built on to the main building. From there you could atlast enter the grounds which surrounded the whole of our White House with amass of greenery.

In daytime you would see only staff officers walking along the paths throughthe park, and at night-time only guards with their dogs. And right here in thepark, quite unnoticable to an outsider, was the entry into the undergroundcommand point, constructed deep beneath the surface and protected bythousands of tons of concrete and steel. Under the ground there was workingand hving accommodation, a communications centre, a restaurant, a hospital,stores and everything necessary for hving and working in conditions ofcomplete isolation. But, apart from that underground command point therewas yet another one, protected not only by concrete, steel and dogs but also bysecrecy. This one was just a spectre. Very few people knew where it wassituated.

It was still twenty minutes before the working day was due to begin, and Iwas strolling along the paths, disturbing the first gold of autumn. Far, far awayin the sky a fighter aircraft was making patterns and scaring the cranes circlingabove fields invisible from where I stood.

Officers were moving in the direction of the White House. It was time for meto move too. Along a Uttle pathway leading into a wide avenue, past amurmuring stream, then around the left wing of the mansion and I foundmyself again in the central courtyard among the thick bushes imder the sterngaze of the machine-gun embrasures beneath the low concrete brows of thegloomy casemates. Again I showed my pass to a saluting guard and entered anechoing white marble hall which had once rung with the sound of spurs, wheresilk skirts had rustled and ostrich feather fans had hidden languid glances.There were no skirts now. Only occasionally one might catch sight of a girltelegraphist from the communications centre. She would be wearing a skirt ofsimple cloth, part of a uniform. Khaki, and close-fitting. To attract thecolonels, no doubt.

I climbed up the white marble staircase. At the top was a guard and anotherdocument check. By no means all the staff colonels were permitted to go upthere, and I was only a senior lieutenant. But the guards let me through. Thosewho saw me from below were surprised. Who was this? What right had he to goup the marble stairs?

I showed my pass once again and entered a darkened corridor, where carpetsdeadened the sound of footsteps. At the end of the corridor were four doors,and four at the beginning too. At the end were the offices of the Armycommander, his first deputy, the chief of staff, and the political god of the 13thArmy known as the Member of the Military Council.

The four doors at the beginning of the corridor led to the most importantdepartments of the staff: the First, Second, Eighth and Special. The First wasthe operations department, dealing with battle planning. The Second was theintelligence department which provided the First department with all infor-

mation about the enemy. The Eighth department had no name, only anumber. Very few people knew what that department did. The Specialdepartment, on the other hand, had no number, only a name. What itsbusiness was everybody knew.

Our corridor was the most carefully guarded part of the headquarters andonly a very limited number of officers were permitted access to it. It was ofcourse used by a number of lieutenants from the Special department and by thegenerals' adjutants. But the colonels turned to look at me: who on earth was I? Iwas not from the Special department and I was not an adjutant. I was an officerfrom the Second department. Here was our black leather-covered door - firston the left. I selected the code number on the console and the door slid open.Beyond it there was another door, made of armour-plate, as in a bank. Ipressed the bell button, a vigilant eye peered through the bullet-proof viewingslit and clicked the lock - I was home.

In the past this had been presumably one large room which had later beendivided into six not very large offices. The more the merrier, as they say. In oneof the offices was the Chief of Intelligence of the 13th Army, my benefactor andprotector, still a lieutenant-colonel, Kravtsov. In the five other offices workedthe five groups of the department. The first group directed all the intelligencework in lower units - division reconnaissance battalions, regimental recon-naissance companies, supplementary reconnaissance companies, and artillery,engineering and chemical reconnaissance. The fifth group dealt with electronicreconnaissance. It had at its disposal two battalions for direct-finding and radiointerception, and apart from that it controlled electronic reconnaissance in alldivisions forming part of our 13th Army. The second and third groups wereterra incognita for me. But after working in the fourth group for a month I wasbeginning to guess what those totally secret groups were doing. The fact is thatour fourth group dealt with the final processing of information arriving from allthe other groups in the department. Apart from that, information flowed infrom below, from divisional headquarters, from above - from the district HQ -and from the side - from our neighbours, the KBG frontier troops.

There were three men in our groups in peacetime. In time of war thereshould be ten. There were three desks in the office, where two Heutenant-colonels - an analyst and a forecaster - and I, a senior lieutenant, worked. I hadthe simplest job of all - troop movements. Naturally the analyst was the seniorman in our group.

Previously the officer working on troop movements had also been aHeutenant-colonel. But the new Chief of Intelligence had thrown him out of thedepartment to make room for me. It was a heutenant-colonel's job according tothe establishment, which meant that if I managed to hold it down I would verysoon be made a captain and in four years' time I would equally automaticallybecome a major and in another five years a lieutenant-colonel. If after that Isucceeded in advancing further, higher ranks would follow automatically. Butif I slipped up somewhere, then for every promotion I would have to fight toothand nail.

The lieutenant-colonels were not at all pleased with the new Chief ofIntelligence for having put a senior lieutenant at a lieutenant-colonel's desk. Myappearance on the scene was a reflection on their authority and experience; butthat was not the main thing. Most important for them was the fact that their newboss might put young and eager officers in their places. They both eyed me withsuspicion and acknowledged my greetings with only sUght nods of the head.

In the office of the information group of the reconnaissance department therewere three desks, three large safes, bookshelves covering the wall and a map ofEurope, also covering a whole wall. Immediately opposite the entrance hung aportrait of a young-looking three-star general. Sometimes, when no one waslooking, I smiled at this colonel-general and gave him a wink. But the generalnever smiled back at me. The expression on his face was cold, severe andserious. His eyes, that mirror of the inner man, were cruel and commanding. Atthe corners of his lips there was a touch of contempt. There was no inscriptionbeneath the portrait or on the back of it -1 checked this when nobody was in theroom. Instead of a name there was only a stamp which read *Mihtary unit 44388'and a stern warning: To be kept only in the secure premises of the Aquariumand its subordinate instructions.' I knew the commanders of the Soviet Armypretty well. It was the duty of an officer to know them. But I was quite sure that Ihad never seen the colonel-general in the portrait in any military pubhcation,including secret ones. All right, general, don't interfere with our work.

On the table in front of me was a pile of messages which had arrrived in thepreceding night. My job was to sort them out, enter the changes in thecomposition and location of the enemy troops in the 'regrouping log' and recordthem on the big map which was kept in the First department at Army HQ.

I was stumped by the very first message: an echelon of twenty BritishChieftain tanks had been observed on a railway bridge across the Rhine nearCologne. The idiots! In which direction was the echelon going? Was it areinforcement or a reduction in force? Twenty tanks were a mere trifle. Butfrom such crumbs, and only from them, it was possible to form a general idea ofwhat was happening. Both the analyst and the forecaster had copies of the samemessages on their desks. And, since they had an absolutely clear picture of whatwas going on, and since they kept in their heads thousands of figures, dates, andnames of people and things, they of course had no need to refer to the previousdays' messages to find the key to unravel such a trifling problem. They lookedprobingly at me and were in no hurry to hint at the answer. I got up from my seatand went to the safe. If I read all the preceding messages the answer wouldprobably be very simple. Four hostile eyes were directed at my back: get on withit, they were saying - you'll find out how lieutenant-colonels earn their living.

Our working day went on to 1700 hours with an hour off for lunch. Anyone whohad urgent work to do could stay in the office until 2100 hours. After that alldocuments had to be handed over to the secret registry and safes and doors had

to be sealed. Only the underground command point never slept. At times ofheightened tension we would take it in turns to remain at headquarters, oneofficer from each group. But in case of a major crisis all staff officers would liveand work for several days at a time in their offices beneath the ground. Theliving conditions in the underground command point were much better, butthere was no sunlight down there, so that when it was possible we would spendthe greater part of our time in our rather cramped offices.

If there were no messages I used to read the ˆIntelligence Summary' of theGeneral Staff. I had come to like this bulky 600-page book and I became soengrossed in it that I could repeat many pages from it by heart, even thoughevery one of them would contain as many as a hundred figures and names.When there was no crisis or special alert the heutenant-colonels woulddisappear at exactly 1700 hours. Like the

dogs in Pavlov's experiments theirdigestive juices became active at that time, though in their case the saliva wasput to a different use as they spat on their military seals before stamping thedocument cases which then went in the safe. From that moment I was on myown. I would read the 'Intelligence Summary' for the hundredth time. Apartfrom the general summary there were similar books about armoured equip-ment, the Navy, the Bundeswehr's mobilisation plans, French nuclearresearch, the NATO alarm system and goodness knows what else.

*Do you ever get any sleep?'

I had not noticed that heutenant-colonel Kravtsov had appeared at the door.

* Sometimes, and what about you?'

*Like you - sometimes,' Kravstov said with a laugh. I knew that Kravstovworked very late every night or else was missing for weeks on end visiting unitsunder his control.

*Shall I test you?'

*Yes please, comrade lieutenant-colonel.'

*Where is the 406th tactical fighter training wing of the United States AirForce?'

*In Saragossa, Spain.'

*What does the US Fifth Army Corps consist of?'

The 3rd armoured division, the 8th mechanised division and the 11thcavalry regiment.'

*Not bad, for a start. But watch out, Suvorov, you'll soon have to pass a test,and if you don't cope with your work you'll be chucked out of headquarters.They won't throw me out, but I'll get a thick ear.'

*ril do my best, comrade lieutenant-colonel.'

'Now go and get some sleep.'

'I could work for another hour.'

'I said get some sleep. You'd be no use to me with a nervous breakdown.'

A couple of weeks later, when the lieutenant-colonel forecaster was away at

district HQ, I had to do his job. In the course of a day and two nights I preparedmy first inteUigence forecast: two thin typed sheets entitled 'Probable militarymovements by the 3rd corps of the Bundeswehr in the forthcoming month.'The Chief of Intelligence went through my forecast and ordered it to be passedto the First department. It was treated like an everyday affair. Nobody praisedme, but nobody laughed at my work.

A sudden draught swept papers off the desks and the lieutenant-colonelsrushed to conceal them with their bodies. They were afraid the papers mightblow away. You could get fifteen years for a single mislaid paper. The door ofthe office opened without a preliminary knock to reveal a lieutenant standingthere.

'Good morning, Konstantin Nikolayevich,' the colonels greeted him with asmile. He was a handsome man, tall and broad-shouldered. His finger-nailswere pink and pohshed. A Ueutenant on the staff was addressed only by firstname and patronymic. It was an enviable position to have - adjutant to theArmy chief of staff. Therefore to address him simply as 'comrade lieutenant'would almost amount to an insult. Hence - 'Konstantin Nikolayevich'.

'The movements report,' Konstantin Nikolayevich said casually, withoutany preliminaries. He could of course have said: 'The chief of staff wants to seethe officer dealing with troop movements with a report on changes in thedispositions of the enemy last night.' But there was a simpler way to say it, asKonstantin Nikolayevich had done: short and to the point and with a touch ofdisdain.

I quickly gathered up the messages into a file cover. The general's adjutantbecame a little more agreeable and then grinned, and said: 'Haven't you everbeen told to smile when you've got a customer on top of you?' The colonelsgriimed obediently at the adjutant's joke. Wretched staff men, anxious to hangon to their soft jobs. I just couldn't stand it. I had nothing to lose but mychains, so I said:

'Don't be rude, lieutenant.'

The adjutant drew a long face. The lieutenant-colonels fell silent and staredat me in amazement. Fool, upstart, ignoramus. How dare he speak Uke that tothe adjutant? To Konstantin Nikolayevich! You're not

in your battalion now,they were thinking. This is the staff. You have to have a feeling for thesituation. You are an uncouth country bumpkin and you're likely to bring ustrouble!

I walked out of the office, not letting the general's adjutant go in front of me.I would never let him go ahead of me. What if he was an adjutant? A general'slackey. Had he ever seen a soldier in the firing line? When the soldier has got aloaded automatic and you have nothing but a red flag in your hand? Once hefeels his weapon in his hands a soldier can easily fall prey to the thought that hemight fire a burst of bullets at his commanding officer. In my time I had led my

men dozens of times through the firing line. And I had never once detecteddoubt in the soldiers' eyes: to fire at the target or indulge in some real killing.Had that adjutant ever led soldiers to the firing line? Had he ever been face toface with them in a forest, in open country, in sub-zero temperatures or in themountains? Had he ever seen troops really angry? Had he ever come across awhole company drunk, with weapons in their hands? The adjutant was makinga career on the soft carpets; but he had no need to get at Vitya Suvorov. I wouldhave put up with it if he had been a captain or if he had at least been the sameage. But he was a mere schoolboy, at least a year younger than me.

In the corridor the general's adjutant trod heavily on my foot as though byaccident. I waited for a chance to get my own back and was ready when it came.I was walking a little ahead of him and to his left. So I jerked my right elbowsharply back and got him in a soft place. The adjutant let out a sort of gurgleand then a groan, gasped for air with an open mouth, bent double andcollapsed against the wall. Slowly he straightened himself out. He was tallerthan me and bigger built. He had huge fists. But he turned out to be weak in thepaunch. Perhaps he hadn't been expecting the blow. That was his fault: youshould always be on the alert, every minute of the day. Then it does not havesuch a devastating effect.

The adjutant was slowly straightening himself up but without taking hiseyes off my hand. I had two fingers sticking out like a catapult prong. In othercountries that meant victory. But for us the gesture means 'I'll poke your eyesout, you bastard.'

He raised himself up slowly by the wall, still keeping his eyes on myprojecting fingers. He reaUsed that his highly placed protector

could now offerhim no protection. We were face to face in an empty corridor. The adjutant wastaller than me and broader, but he reahsed that I no longer had any greatambitions, that nothing mattered to me except victory here and now. Healready knew that at the slightest move or even word on his part I would replywith a terrible jab from my fingers in his eyes and would grab him right away bythe throat and never let him go.

Without blinking he slowly raised his hands to his throat, felt for his tie andstraightened it out. Then he said:

The chief of staff is waiting ...'

*... for you ...' I interjected.

The chief of staff is waiting for you.'

I found it difficult to bring myself back to real fife. I had already taken leaveof it, preparing for a fight to the death. But he did not want to fight. I tookseveral deep breaths and rubbed my hands, numb from the tension. He did nottake his eyes off my face. Apparently my expression had changed, so as tosuggest to him that I no longer intended to kill him. I turned about and strodeoff down the corridor. He followed me. I was a senior lieutenant and he wasstill a simple Heutenant: let him potter along behind.

There were two desks in the outside office, like bastions each defending adoor. One door led to the Commander's office, the other to the chief of staff s.

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Behind the poHshed desk at the Commander's door sat his adjutant. He wasalso a heutenant, and he also was never addressed by his rank or by his surname- but simply as Arnold Nikolayevich. He too was tall and handsome. Hisuniform was not made from ordinary officers' material but from general'scloth. He then showed me not the slightest respect either, but looked straightthrough me. There was a reason for this: my boss, the Chief of InteUigence,Lt-colonel Kravtsov, had been appointed to that important post without theagreement of the Commander of the Army, his deputy or the chief of staff, andhad ousted their man from the job. That accounted for the disdain of theCommander and the fault-finding on the part of the chief of staff. It alsoaccounted for a general loathing on the part of all the staff officers, especiallythose working in 'Olympia' on the first floor, for all the people Kravtsov hadbrought along with him. We were outsiders,

uninvited guests.

The chief of staff, Major-General Shevchenko, asked me sensible questionsand hstened to me without interrupting. I expected some criticism, but hesimply stared me straight in the face. New officers were appearing on the staff.Someone's invisible but powerful hand was pushing them right on to the softcarpets of the first floor. And for some reason nobody was asking the chief ofstaffs opinion. That could not possibly please him. Power quietly slips awaybetween your fingers, like water; how can you stop it? He swung roundtowards the window and looked out into the garden, gripping his hands behindhis back. His cheeks were bluish in colour and his veins stood out a little. Iremained in the doorway, not knowing what to do next.

ˆComrade general, may I take my leave?'

He did not reply. He just remained silent. Perhaps he had not heard myquestion. But he had heard it, and after another short silence he muttered,Tes' without turning towards me.

In the outer office the two adjutants greeted me with unfriendly looks. Thechief of staff s adjutant had obviously told his colleague all about it. But theyhad not yet, of course, reported what happened to their protectors, thoughthey would certainly do so in time. But for that they would have to choose asuitable moment, when their bosses were in the right mood to hear such news.

I went towards the door feeling their malevolent looks like guns in the backof my neck. I could distinguish two emotions in me then: rehef and disappoint-ment. My posting to the staff was now over, and I could look forward to alimitless white icy emptiness beyond the Arctic circle or else the parchedyellow desert of Central Asia, and possibly an officer's court of honour.

The colonels greeted me with deathly silence. They did not of course knowwhat had happened in the corridor, but what had happened already in theoffice was quite sufficient for them to ignore me. I was an upstart. I hadsuddenly shot up to a high place without understanding or appreciating whathad happened to me; I had not held the job down and had fallen into the abyss.I was now nobody, an un-person. My fate caused them no concern. Whatinterested them more was the question: would my punishment be extended toinclude my boss whom they hated so much?

I locked my papers in the safe and hurried off to see Lt-colonel Kravtsovand to warn him of the impending unpleasantness.

'You shouldn't pick quarrels with the adjutants,' he said in a helpful tonewithout appearing to be especially concerned about what had happened. Infact, he appeared immediately to have forgotten what I had told him. *What doyou plan to do this evening?'

Trepare to hand over my job.'

'But nobody's turning you off the staff.'

They soon will, though.'

They can't do it. I brought you here, Suvorov, along with me, and I alonecan order you to get out of here. So what do you propose to do this evening?'

*Learn about the 69th group of the US 6th Fleet.'

'All right. But, apart from intellectual effort, you need physical exercise aswell. You are an intelligence officer, and you must go through our trainingcourse. Do you know what the second group in our department does?'

'Yes.'

'But how could you know?'

'I guessed.'

'So what does it do in your opinion?'

'It's in charge of espionage by secret agents.'

'That's right. And maybe you know what the third group does?' He lookedat me sceptically.

'Yes, I do.'

He strode around the room, trying to grasp what I had said. Then he sathimself down suddenly in a chair.

'Sit down.'

I sat down.

'Look here, Suvorov, you have been receiving from the second group Uttlescraps of information for processing, so that you could reasonably guess wherethey came from. But you haven't been getting anything at all from the thirdgroup '

'From which I concluded that the forces controlled by the third group arebrought into action only in wartime, and the rest I guessed.'

'Your guess might have been wrong.'

'But the officers in the third group are a very tough lot, every one ofthem '

'So what do you think they do?'

'In wartime they extract information by force ...'

'... and cunning,' he interjected.

'They are saboteurs and terrorists.'

'Do you know what we call the group?'

'No, I couldn't know that.'

'It's called Spetsnaz. Special reconnaissance units. It's sabotage and recon-naissance by force. Could you guess how many such troops there are at thedisposal of the third group?'

*A battalion.'

He jumped up out of his chair.

*Who told you that?'

*I guessed it.'

*But how?'

By analogy. In every division there is one company doing reconnaissancein depth. It is of course not Spetsnaz, but it's very similar. An Army is a stagehigher than a division, which means that you should have at your disposal nota company but a battalion, that is one stage higher.'

Tour times a week you are to turn up in the evening at this address,bringing your sports equipment with you. That's all. You may go.'

ˆVerywell.'

*If a new Army Conmiander and a new chief of staff arrive and consequen-tly new adjutants, try to be on good terms with them.'

*Do you think the command of our Army is going to change soon?'

*I didn't say that.'

In our information group in the reconnaissance department some sUghtchanges had taken place. The heutenant-colonel who dealt with the forecast-ing was suddenly retired into the reserve. He was summoned to appear beforea medical commission which discovered something that made it impossiblefor him to stay in the Army - better for him to take his pension. He hadn'tthe slightest desire to retire, because every year's service over twenty-fivewould have produced a substantial increase in his pension. But the doctorswere adamant: his health was the most important thing.

A captain from the intelligence unit of the 87th division was appointed asforecaster in place of the lieutenant-colonel.

The chief of staff had to know everything available about the enemy; soevery morning, once I sorted out the messages received, I would report tohim. He never summoned me by telephone, but simply sent his adjutant forme.

Two weeks had already passed since our row. I was sure that the adjutanthad long ago informed his chief about what had happened, in a way thatreflected well on himself, of course. But I was still walking around thecorridors of the first floor: I had still not been banished. The general'sadjutants couldn't quite make this out. They could see that I was a sort ofexception to the rule, but they didn't know exactly in what way or why, and

* Later, this battalion was reduced to a company. Spare companies have been used to createindependent Spetsnaz regiments.

consequently they treated me with more respect. I was also puzzled by it. Whyon earth should I be an exception?

More changes. The officer in charge of the First department was replaced, andalong with him the older men in the group and several leading officers weredismissed. A lieutenant-colonel was appointed in place of the colonel, and hebrought along with him a whole crowd of captains and first lieutenants andsettled them down at the lieutenant-colonels' desks.

The Chief of Intelligence of the 13th Army ordered me to do a short course toprepare myself for work in the third group.'

Tes ... yes ... I know ... come in.' He had a broad grin on his face. Hishuge hands reminded me of a crab's claws. ^Information officers must workwith us and must understand how the little scraps of information are gatheredand what is their value. Get changed.'

He was already bare-footed, in a green tracksuit of soft but apparently toughmaterial. His forearms were bare and reminded me of the powerful, unusuallyclean, hairy arms of the surgeon who, five years previously, had put metogether from small pieces.

We were in a spacious sunny sports centre. In the middle of the area weretwo ordinary chairs looking very small in that vast space.

'Sit down.'

We sat face to face in the middle of the area.

Tut your hands on your knees and relax them completely. Always sit likethat. In all circumstances you must be utterly relaxed. Your lower jaw shouldnot touch the upper one. It should hang down slightly. Relax your neck, yourlegs, your feet. Never cross your legs, because that interferes with your bloodcirculation. That's the way.'

He stood up and walked round me, inspecting me critically from all sides.Then with his strong hands he felt my neck, the muscles in my back and my

grip-

'Never sit drumming your fingers on your desk-top. Only people sufferingfrom nerves do that. Soviet military intelligence doesn't keep such people in itsranks. Now then, you are relaxed enough, let's do some exercises.'

He sat down on a chair, holding on to it with his hand, started rocking backon the back legs, and then suddenly tipped right over backwards

along with thechair. And he was still smiling. He jumped up, lifted up the chair and sat downon it, hands on knees.

'Remember - if you fall backwards when sitting on a chair, nothing canhappen to you, so long, of course, as there's no wall or hole behind you. To fallbackwards while sitting on a chair is as easy and as safe as going down on your

knees or walking on all fours. But human nature makes us resist fallingbackwards. It's only our mind that holds us back.... Now hold on to the chair

with your hands Vm not going to be your safety net; you can't hurt

yourself anyway. Rock back on the chair Stop, stop: are you afraid?'

*0f course I'm afraid.'

'Never mind. That's normal. Everybody gets scared. It would be strange ifyou were not afraid. Everybody is. So hold on to the seat. Start rockingwithout me telling you '

I rocked back on the chair, carefully balancing my weight, then gently upsetthe balance, rocking a bit further, and the chair fell slowly back into thedepths. I squeezed myself into the seat and drew my head into my shoulders.The ceiling shot upwards, but the fall dragged out. Time stopped. Andsuddenly the back of the chair crashed down on the floor. It was only then thatI got really scared and at the same moment burst out laughing: nothing at allhad happened to me. My head, responding to a reflex a million years old, hadmoved forward, so that I couldn't possibly hit the back of it. It was my back,pressed tightly to the chair-back, that took the blow. But the area of the back ismuch greater than the area of the bottom of the feet, so that it is less painful tofall backwards than to jump off a chair on to the floor.

He offered me a hand.

*Can I try again?'

*0f course.' He smiled.

I sat on the chair, grabbed the seat and fell over backwards.

*ril have another go,' I cried out happily.

'Carry on - enjoy yourself.'

*The Academy of Science has worked out at our request what is the besttechnique for jumping off fast-moving trains and out of motor-cars and

trams But don't worry about the mathematics. There's one simple rule to

remember: from a really fast train you must jump backwards and in theopposite direction to the way the train's moving; you must land with your legsdoubled up, trying to keep your balance and not touching the ground withyour hands. As you hit the ground you must make a violent effort to push itaway and for a few seconds continue to run alongside the train, graduallyslowing down. Our men can jump from a train travelling at 70 kilometres anhour. That's the average. But some can do much better than that, jumping offat much higher speeds, going down hill, from bridges, jumping when carryingweapons and with a heavy weight on their backs. Remember, the mostimportant thing is not to touch the ground with your hands. Your legs willcarry you along. The leg muscles are exceptionally strong, are very dynamicand have great staying-power. By touching the ground with your hand youmay upset the rapid rhythm of the leg movements. That would cause you tofall and die a painful death. We'll have some training at it, first in the

gymnasium and later on a real train. We start at a speed of 10 kilometres anhour ...'

A month later we were standing on an open railway bridge and looking down.There was no parapet, and far beneath a cold leaden-coloured river was flowingslowly through the bridge, swirUng into snake-like whirls as it met the bridgesupports. I had already been through my training and reahsed that a man couldwalk along a telegraph wire above a bottomless abyss. It was all a matter ofpsychological toughening. You had to be convinced that nothing bad wasgoing to happen and then all was well. Circus performers wasted years onelementary matters. They were wrong. They did not have a scientificapproach. They based their training on physical exercises and did not payenough attention to psychology. They did a lot of training, but they didn't likethe thought of death, they were afraid of it and tried to avoid it, forgetting thatyou could derive pleasure not only from another person's death but from yourown too. And only people

who did not fear death could perform miracles alongwith the gods.

Tools say that you mustn't look down,' he shouted. *But there's greatpleasure to be had from looking down at whirlpools.'

I looked down into the depths and they no longer seemed to have that fatalattraction that a snake's jaws have for a frog. The palms of my hands no longerbroke out in a cold sweat.

Further changes were announced in the command of the 13th Army. Therewere two major-generals of artillery in each Army. One was in command of themissile units and the artillery; the other of the anti-aircraft defences. In the13th both of them had been replaced.

Really sweeping changes had taken place in the Carpathian military district.

The commanding officer of the district, Colonel-General Bisyarin, had diedsuddenly. It was less than a year since he had been in command of theCarpathian Front in Czechoslovakia. He had been fit and well and had led thefour armies of his Front without apparent strain. It was said that he had neverbeen ill. Suddenly he was gone.

Command of the military district was taken over by Lieutenant-General ofTank Forces Obaturov. And immediately, in the staff of the military district,there was a wholesale clear-out of Bisyarin's people and their replacement withObaturov's. The winds of change swept down into the staffs of the Armies.There were four of them in the district: the 57th Air, the 8th Guards Tank, the

13th and the 38th. Two new generals - the new officer commanding our 13thArmy and the new chief of staff- were soon treading the soft carpeting of ourcorridor.

One day I was responsible for opening the armour-plated door of thereconnaissance department to all visitors. There was a ring at the bell, andthrough the glass of the spy-hole I saw a strange lieutenant. I quickly realisedwho it was.

'Password?'

'Omsk'.

'Authority?'

'106.'

'Enter.' - The heavy door moved smoothly aside to let him in.

'Good morning. Comrade senior heutenant, I have to see the Chief ofIntelligence.'

'I will tell him. Just wait a moment please.' I knocked on my boss's door andwent straight in.

'Comrade lieutenant-colonel, the new Army Commander's adjutant to seeyou.'

'Show him in.'

The lieutenant entered.

'Comrade lieutenant-colonel, the Army Commander would like to see you.'

I knew in advance that there would be large-scale exercises, that messageswould be pouring down as from the horn of plenty, that the young adjutantswould be exhausted and would have red, bloodshot eyes as we spent nightstogether poring over the Big Map. I knew that after the first exercises the twonew adjutants and I would get together, get really drunk and become friends. Iwould tell them dirty jokes, and they would tell me funny stories concerningthe private lives of their protectors. But even now, after our very first meeting,from the way the adjutant addressed me and the way he entered my chiefsoffice, I felt that we were people of the same ilk. The new generals on the Armystaff were Obaturov's people. The new heads of departments, includingKravtsov, were Obaturov's people. The new adjutants and the new staffofficers were all Obaturov's people. I felt for the first time that I was also amember of that group. And I knew that the new officer commanding theCarpathian mihtary district, Lieutenant-General Obaturov, belonged to somepowerful group which was moving fast and irresistibly into positions of power.

All those who had been appointed to the staff and to the other staffs in thedistrict before us were people of a different ilk. Their day was over. Those whowere old enough would be thrown out on a pension; the others would land upin the burning deserts. The old group had collapsed from a mighty blow,invisible from outside, and its individual pieces were fated never to be loyalservants of the powerful of this society or to bathe in the warmth of the realpower.

I came across the former adjutant of the former chief of staff in the secretregistry. He was handing over documents before leaving for somewhere very

remote to take command of a platoon. He had been an officer for more than twoyears but had never had command of any group of soldiers, let alone a bunch ofundisciplined, half-drunk and utterly unmanageable soldiers. If he had startedhis service like that all would have been well. But his service had started withsoft carpets. Whatever happened, he ate his fill and lived in comfort. Now allthat was over. A man gets accustomed to living on the edge of a precipice. Andif he has always lived there it is difficult for him to imagine that there can be anyother life. But the lieutenant was swept up to the very top and had nowdropped again into the abyss. To the very bottom. And the fall was verypainful.

He was smiling at me. But it was a rather canine smile. Once, long ago in theFar East, I saw two dogs trying to attach themselves to a strange pack. But thepack snarled, unwilling to accept strangers into their company. Then one ofthe dogs attacked its unfortunate comrade and bit it. Their fight continued fora long time while the pack watched patiently for the outcome of the duel. Onehowled, while the other, weaker one let out terrible yelps, reluctant to partwith its life. Once he had killed his comrade, or maybe brother, covered withbites and scars, the victorious dog, tail between his legs, approached the pack,indicating his readiness to submit. The whole pack then set upon him and torehim to pieces.

For some reason the former adjutant reminded me of that dog with his tailbetween his legs, ready to fight anybody if he could only be accepted into thecompany of the victors. Fool, I thought, act proud: go to your desert and don'tdrop your tail until you are attacked.

The examination was long and difficult. I passed it. Without any specialdistinction - but I passed.

*Well, then,' said Kravtsov, 'it's time to try you out on the real thing. Thetraining starts soon. I'll send you off with a Spetsnaz group. As an inspector.'

'I'm ready, comrade lieutenant-colonel.'

*In the normal course of events, inspecting is easy. But Spetsnaz is anexception. To inspect a group, you have to jump with it. That's the

first thing.The second thing is that you mustn't lag behind the group. These lads havehigh standards. If the inspector lags behind they won't wait for him. Often, inthe early days of a training operation, they make a special effort to break speedrecords in order to leave the inspector behind and stop him from interferingwith their work. There are no punishments, no reprimands for them. Wereserve the punishments for inspectors who can't stand the pace.'

'I won't lag behind.'

'We'll see.'

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Chapter Three

The most important item in the equipment oidiSpetsnaz soldier is his footwear.Apart from his parachute, of course.

A storekeeper who, to judge from the scar on his neck, had had longexperience in the Spetsnaz himself, handed me a pair of boots from the storeand I inspected them with interest. They are a form of footwear which isneither a boot nor a shoe, but something in between, a hybrid combining thebest features of both. The boots are known officially as J-Bs - Jump-Boots.

The boots are made from thick, soft ox-hide and weigh a good deal less thanthey appear to at first sight. There are lots of straps and clasps on each boot;two straps around the heel, one around the sole, and two around the calf. Thestraps are also very soft. Every boot is the result of thousands of years ofexperience. Since that was the way our ancestors embarked on campaigns -their feet wrapped in soft leather and tied up with straps -that was the way myboots were made - soft leather and straps.

On the other hand, our ancestors never saw such soles as my boots had. Theywere thick, broad and soft. But their resilience did not mean that they were nothard-wearing. Each sole was made up of three thick layers, one on top of theother like scales, making the sole both tough and flexible. Similar scale-Ukelayers are used in bullet-proof jackets. But they are not used in the boot soles toprotect you from bullets, of course. They are to protect the soles of the feetfrom the spikes and stakes which are to be encountered in the approaches tospecially important targets. With these soles it is even possible to run acrossfire.

And they have one other use: they project a Httle at the sides and can beused for attaching ski bindings.

The pattern on the soles of our boots is copied from the soles of boots wornby the troops of our probable enemies. Depending on what area we are tooperate in we can leave behind us the standard American, French, Spanish orany other footprints.

That is not, however, the main deception. One of the Spetsnaz issue boots orjump boots has the heel at the front and the sole behind. So when a Spetsnazsoldier is going in one direction his footprints point in the other. The heels are,of course, made thinner and the soles thicker, so as to be comfortable on thefeet and the reversal of heel and sole does not make it difficult to walk. Thedeception would be revealed almost immediately, of course, were it not thatevery Spetsnaz soldier has normal boots too. An experienced tracker wouldprobably not be deceived, either. He would know that, in vigorous fast

walking, the toe leaves a deeper impression than the heel. But do many peoplelook closely at the footprints left by soldiers' feet? Are there many who knowthat the toe leaves a clearer imprint? Do many people notice that footprintshave suddenly appeared pointing the other way round? Are many able to assesswhat they see at its real value? Who would have thought of having a boot withthe heel and the sole reversed? To whom would it occur that if the footprintsappeared to be going eastwards it meant that the man who made them wasgoing west? What's more, we are not stupid. Spetsnaz, like wolves, do not goaround on their own. And like wolves we walk in each other's footprints. Youwould never know how many men there were in a group - three or a hundred.And when several feet have trodden in one footprint it becomes practicallyimpossible to detect whether the heels have made a deeper impression than thetoes.

Only one kind of sock is used with the Spetsnaz boots: a very thick sock madeof pure wool. Wherever we go, into the permanent frost or the burning desert,we always wear exactly the same kind of socks: very thick, woollen and grey.Such socks keep your feet warm, protect the foot from perspiration, do not ruband do not wear into holes. Each Spetsnaz soldier has two pairs of socks.Whether for a day or a month, just two pairs. It's up to him to make do.

As for the rest of a Spetsnaz soldier's clothing, his underwear is made of thinlinen. It should be new but already used a little and laundered

at least once.Over the thin underwear he wears a vest made of a thick string, so thatthere is always a layer of air about a centimetre deep between the underwearand the outer garments. This was cleverly thought out. If it's very hot and youare running with sweat and your whole body is burning, the string vest is yoursalvation. Your clothes do not cling to your body and there is excellentventilation. When it's cold the air pocket protects the body like a feather duvet,and moreover, weighs nothing. The string vest has yet another purpose. If amosquito gets its nose through your clothes it reaches empty space and not thebody. Only in very difficult circumstances does a Spetsnaz soldier allow himselfto be driven out into the open. He spends his time in forests and marshes. Hemay lie for hours in a burning hot marsh or in fierce stinging nettles with cloudsof mosquitoes buzzing around him. Only the string vest can save him then.Over it he wears trousers and a tunic of green cotton material. All seams aretreble-stitched. The tunic and trousers are soft but hard-wearing. At theelbows, knees and shoulders the material is trebled for greater strength.

On his head a Spetsnaz soldier wears a helmet. In winter this is made of furwith a silk lining, in summer from cotton. It consists of two parts: the helmetproper and its mask. The helmet must not leave his head in any circumstances,even in the course of a parachute jump. It must have no clasps, straps orprojections on the outside, because at the time of the jump it is right next to theparachute. There must be nothing on the helmet to interfere with the openingof the parachute's canopy and cords. Consequently the helmet worn for a dropis made exactly to the shape of a man's head, covering his head, neck and chinand leaving exposed only the eyes, nose and mouth. During operations, or when

the weather is particularly bad, the mask is pulled down over the eyes, nose andmouth for the sake of camouflage.

The saboteur also wears an outer garment like an anorak. It is thick, warm,Hght and waterproof. In it you can He in a marsh without getting wet or sleep inthe snow without freezing. It comes down to the middle of the thighs so as notto interfere with walking, and if need be you could sit for days on a patch of ice,as it provides something to sit on. It is very full at the bottom, which isimportant when running or walking fast. But if necessary the lower part can bepulled in tightly round the legs and so keep the warmth in. The Spetsnaz usedto have similar trousers, padded and warm. But that was a mistake. When

youhave to walk for days on end without stopping such trousers are a nuisance.They upset the ventilation. Our wise ancestors never wore fur-lined trousers.Instead they had fur coats reaching down to their heels. And they were right,because fur trousers make you sweat but a long coat doesn't. We have nowlearnt this lesson, and a Spetsnaz soldier has not only a top coat, but a long skirtcovering his body almost down to the heels which he can attach to it. In thisway he can keep warm, but is never too hot. The skirt is easily unbuttoned androlled up so that it does not take up much space in the man's kit.

In the old days the top coat was reversible. One side was white and the othergrey and green in patches. But that was also a mistake. The coat had to be softinside, like a woman's skin, but on the outside it had to be as rough asrhinoceros hide. That is why the top coats are no longer reversible. They aresoft inside and rough on the outside. And they are light grey in colour, like lastyear's grass or dirty snow. It's a very well-chosen colour. But in case of greatneed a white camouflage smock can be worn over the coat.

The whole of a Spetsnaz soldier's equipment is carried in his special fieldback-pack. Like all his clothes and other equipment it is hght grey in colour. Itis not large, is rectangular in shape, and is made from a very tightly wovenmaterial. In order that it should not drag the shoulders back it is made very flat,but wide and long. The fastenings are arranged so that it can be attached to thebody in different places. It can be carried on the chest, or it can be carried highon the back, or it can be dropped right down to the man's backside and besuspended on his belt, thus freeing his sore shoulders for a while.

Wherever a Spetsnaz soldier has to go he takes only one flask of water withhim - 810 grams. Apart from that he has a httle bottle of small browndisinfecting tablets. You throw one of the tablets into water polluted with oil,dysentry bacillae and soap suds, and in one minute all the filth falls to thebottom and you can pour off the top and drink it. Pure water produced in thisway has a revolting taste and a strong smell of chlorine. But a Spetsnaz man willdrink it. Anyone who knows what real thirst is like will drink this treated waterwith the greatest of pleasure.

When a Spetsnaz soldier sets out, whether for a week or a month, theduration of the operation makes no difference. He always takes with himexactly the same quantity of food - 2,765 grams. It frequently happens that inthe course of an operation, food, water and ammunition are dropped from

aircraft. But it may not happen, and then he has to make out as best he can.Nearly three kilograms of food is a great deal, bearing in mind the unusuallyhigh calorie content of the specially developed and prepared food. But if it'snot enough, then he will have to obtain food independently. He might kill adeer or a wild boar; he may catch fish, eat berries, mushrooms, hedgehogs,frogs, snakes, snails and earthworms; he can cook up birch bark and acorns. . . there's plenty a hungry man can eat, especially if he is equipped with theconcentrated experience of many centuries.

Apart from food, the Spetsnaz soldier carries in his back-pack four boxes ofspecial matches which are not affected by the wet, and will light in any wind orthe heaviest downpour. He has a hundred tablets of dry spirit. He is notallowed to light any fires, so he keeps warm and cooks his food by the flamefrom a tablet. The flame is exactly the same as a candle flame, only moredependable in a wind. Also in his back-pack are twenty other tablets -medicinal ones to deal with every kind of illness and poisoning. There is alsoone towel, a toothbrush and paste, a safety razor, a tube of liquid soap, afish-hook and line, and a needle and cotton. A Spetsnaz soldier has no need totake a comb with him, because before he jumps his head is shaved bald, so thathis head perspires less and wet hair cannot get into his eyes. The hair growsagain in the course of a month, but not long enough to justify wasting space ona comb. He takes quite a lot with him as it is.

As for weapons, there are two possibilities: the full complement, or alightweight issue.

The full complement consists of a Kalashnikov automatic AKMS and 300rounds. Some automatics are equipped with the PBS—a silencer and flamesuppressor—and the NSP-3—a night gunsight dimmer. During a parachutedrop the automatic is kept in its case so as not to interfere with the properopening of the parachute. In order that he should not be defenceless immedi-ately after landing each man has a P-8 silenced pistol and 32 rounds to go withit. Apart from that he carries on his right calf a huge knife for cutting parachutelines, and on his left calf four spare blades. The Spetsnaz knife is no ordinaryknife. It has a powerful spring in it so that when you remove the safety catchand press the release button the knife blade shoots out with a terrible hiss,forcing the hand holding the empty handle smartly back. The heavy blade cancarry 25 metres. If it lands in a tree it is not always possible to pull it out again,in which case the soldier puts a spare blade into the empty handle, leaning on itwith all the weight of

his body to compress the powerful spring. He can thenput the safety catch on and use the knife again as an ordinary knife: for slicingpeople or bread, as a file or as a wire-cutter. U a Spetsnaz soldier is carrying thefull complement of weapons, he then has in his pack in addition to everythingelse six grenades, some plastic explosive, and directional mines or some otherheavy weapon.

The lighter complement of weapons is carried by officers and radio oper-ators. It includes an automatic with 120 cartridges, a noiseless pistol and aknife. I was issued with all this in the store by the highly experienced

quartermaster. The pistol I was given was a real one, but the automatic was onlyfor training. I was going out with a Spetsnaz group as an imipire, and since I wasonly an observer I had no need to shoot. But I was also an intelhgence officerand had to experience the weight of an automatic and its anmiunition. So Icarried a training weapon. It was the same as the ones used in action except thatit was worn out and had been written off. An opening had been bored in thecartridge chamber of the barrel and a warning engraved: Tor training purposesonly.'

I slung the automatic over my shoulder. It was many years since I had had tocarry a training automatic with a hole in the chamber. The rawest of privatesand cadets at military colleges begin their service with these weapons. Anyonecarrying one in the Army usually finds himself the butt of friendly jokes. I didnot of course feel myself to be raw or inexperienced. But I was neverthelesscompletely new to the Spetsnaz forces. So, having been issued with an auto-matic with a hole in it, I decided to find out if I was being taken for a greenhorn.Were the men trying out one of their old Army tricks on me? I quickly took thepack from my shoulder and opened the side pocket. I found what I was lookingfor. There was a spoon, as there should have been, but like the automatic, it hada hole drilled in it and the same inscription: Tor training purposes only'.

'Sorry, comrade senior heutenant,' said the Spetsnaz veteran looking slightlysheepish, 'we didn't check it properly.'

He was disappointed to find that it was not my first day in the Army and that Iknew the old tricks and had my wits about me. He sunmioned his assistant, avery young private, and told him off on the spot for being so careless. We bothunderstood that it had nothing to

do with the young private and that it was thesergeant himself who had slipped me the spoon. He ordered the spoon thrownaway at once. I knew, of course, that it would not be thrown away. It would beused again on many generations o{Spetsnaz recruits. But rules are rules. Thesergeant had to give the necessary instructions, and the private had to bepunished. The sergeant quickly found another spoon and gave it to me. Hereverted to his serious, businesslike manner:

'Good luck, comrade senior heutenant.'

'Thank you, sergeant.'

Everyone in the Soviet Army folds his own parachute. This applies even togenerals. It makes sense: if your parachute fails to open all the responsibilitylies with you, even if you're dead. No hving person bears any responsibihty.

All the parachutes are kept in the stores. They are folded, marked and alwaysready for use. Each parachute is signed on the silk with the man's name and thewords: 'I folded this parachute myself.'

But when we are not roused by a night alarm, but are going on an exercisewith time for proper preparations, then all the parachutes are unpacked andrefolded. And again everyone signs: 'I folded this parachute myself.'

The folding procedure is carried out in the conditions in which the jump willhave to be made. We were to jump in sub-zero temperatures, so the folding wasalso done below zero, at six in the morning.

The whole battalion was folding parachutes that day, on a huge paradeground surrounded by a tall fence to defeat the curiosity of other troops.

The ˆparachute tables' had been prepared. They were not really tables butlong sheets of tarpaulin spread out on the concrete and held down with specialspikes. We took it in turns. First I would help to fold someone else's parachute.Then we would fold my parachute, reversing the roles. Next we would fold hisspare one, with him in charge, then mine with me in charge. Some of us wouldjump with one rather than two parachutes. But everyone prepared both hisparachutes, even in a hard frost.

Officers of the intelligence department of the Army were packing

theirparachutes along with the battalion. We were acting as observers and wouldhave to spend weeks along with the Spetsnaz plodding through the snow

We then went off to our warm barracks, leaving our parachutes under heavyguard in the cold. If they had been brought into the warm premises invisibledrops of moisture would have condensed on the cold material, and when nextday they were taken out into the frost again the drops would turn into minutepieces of ice, making the layers of fabric stick hard together. That would becertain death. It was perfectly simple, and even the youngest privates knew it.Yet such things happen, and a whole group of soldiers could perish in one go. Awhole platoon, a whole company. There are hundreds of mistakes that can bemade in packing and storing parachutes. The price is always the same: yourlife. With a hand stiff from the cold I had signed my name on the silk stripes ofmy two parachutes: * Senior Lieutenant Suvorov. I folded this parachutemyself.' If I smashed myself up they would always be able to find the culprit.

We were warming ourselves in the comfort of the barracks. Then we wouldhave a late supper, and after that the final preparations. Everybody was alreadyshaved bald. Everyone had been to the baths and taken a steam bath. The menneeded to warm themselves through, because it would be some time beforethey came across warm water again. Long after midnight ever>'one was asleep.They had to store up sleep for many weeks ahead. They all needed to have tenhours. All the barrack windows were blacked out so that nobody should beawakened early. Everyone needed deep sleep. For that there is a litde secret.You He on your back, stretch out and relax the whole body. Then you shut youreyes and look upwards beneath your eyelids. That is the normal position of theeyes during sleep. In such a position a person will drop off to sleep quickly,easily and deeply. We were to be wakened very late. And it wouldn't be theusual, ^Everybody out! On parade in thirty seconds!' No, a few privates andsergeants who were not going on the exercise and who had been guarding thecompany's weapons and parachutes would come in quietly and wake each one

gently: 'Come on, Kolya, time to get up.' Time to rise, comrade seniorlieutenant.' Time, time. Get up, lads. It's time for us to move.

The forty-third Spetsnaz group of the 296th independent reconnaissancebattahon of the Spetsnaz consisted of twelve men. I, as the intelligenceofficer, made the thirteenth. I was going as an umpire,

checking on theperformance of the group. I had the easiest job. I didn't have to make anydecisions. My job was to put questions to the troops, to the commandingofficer or to his deputy, just when they least expected them. I had with me a listof a hundred questions, many of which I still didn't know the exact answer to.My job was to put the question and record the reply. Officers of the third groupheaded by lieutenant-colonel Kravtsov would later go through the repUes anddecide who got it wrong and who got it right.

A Spetsnaz group takes with it two P351-M radio sets, a scramblingapparatus and an instrument for the high-speed transmission of signals.

That night we had to carry out a large-scale operation to put out of action theradar stations of the 8th Guards Tank Army, against which we were going intoaction. Simultaneously a massive missile and air attack was to be carried out onits command posts and troop concentrations, in the course of which twenty-eight leading Spetsnaz groups from our battalion were to be dropped. Thegroups had various tasks and were of differing composition, from three to fortymen. Some were led by sergeants, others by officers. On subsequent nightsfurther groups would be dropped, in a variety of districts, by different routesand from different heights. We were to be dropped today from a very low level,about a hundred metres. Each of us had only one parachute, which would openup explosively with the help of a gas canister. As such a height a secondparachute was not necessary.

Have you ever seen animal fear in people's eyes? I have - when they werepreparing to be dropped from a low level with the gas-assisted parachuterelease. Before the take-off we had all been weighed, along with what washanging on us. And there we were, sitting in the plane in accordance with ourweight. The heaviest had to jump first, then progressively lighter men down tothe very lightest. That was so that the heaviest should not fall on to the canopiesof the lighter ones and so collapse their parachutes. First to go was the big highcheek-boned radio operator whose name I did not know. He was known in thegroup by the nickname of Bald Tarzan: a great, sullen hulk of a man. Therewere bigger people in the group, but he had been weighed along with his radioset and was consequently the heaviest; so he jumped first. After him wentanother radio operator known as Brother Yevlampius. Third in weight wasGenghis Khan, the group's cipher clerk. These three who went first had a very

difficult jump to make. Each had to take with him a container suspended on afifteen-metre rope. Each had to jump clutching the container to his chest andthen, when the parachute opened, to let it drop down beneath him. Thecontainer would drop along with the paratrooper but fifteen metres belowhim. In such an operation the container hits the ground first, after which itbecomes a little easier for the paratrooper, and in the last fractions of a secondhis speed reduces a litde. He lands right alongside the container. Because ofthe speed and the wind he is carried a Httle to one side and practically neverlands on his container. But that doesn't make it any easier - the jump with acontainer is a very risky business, especially at low levels. The fourth to jumpwas the deputy commander of the group. Sergeant Drozdov, the biggest manin the group. He was known as the Fist and, looking at his huge hand, Irealised that you couldn't think of a better nickname. A huge man - tre-mendous. Fancy nature producing such an extraordinary person! After theFist went Lieutenant Yeliseyev, the group's commander: also a very big man,although not as big as his deputy. The Heutenant is known by the number ofthe group - 43-1. He also has some nickname, of course, but who would dareto call an officer by his nickname in front of another officer? Next to thecommander sat the ordinary paratroopers, broad-shouldered and of powerfulphysique: the Whip, the Vampire, the Smoothing Iron, Nicholas the Third,Negative, Chopin, Karl de la Duchesse. They also have some name for me, ofcourse, but officially I have no nickname, only number 43-C, standing forcontrol.

I was the smallest and the lightest in the 43rd sabotage group. ConsequentlyI was tossed out of the plane last. That meant that I was sitting right next to thehatch. The last one to jump also took the job of despatcher who checked eachone at the last moment and had the right if need arose to call a halt to the jumpat any moment. It was a very tough job, if only because he sat at the very tailend and all had their faces turned to him. It was as though he was on a stageand everyone was looking at him. Wherever I looked the eyes of a man aboutto jump were staring at me - wild eyes, all of them, except perhaps thecommander's. He seemed to be dozing quietly, completely relaxed. But all theother eyes had a faint glint of craziness about them. It's fine to jump from threethousand metres - really beautiful! But this was only a hundred. All sorts ofdodges have been thought up for suppressing fear, but you can't really getaway from it. It was sitting right next to us.

My ears popped as the plane went into a sudden dive. The tops of treesflashed past. I had a rotten part to play: they all had their release lines attachedto the central rail and I alone had it loose on my chest. I

had to let them all gopast me and at the last moment to hook my line on above my head. But what ifI missed? What if in the confusion of jumping I didn't manage to clip it on? Itwould be too late then to open the parachute by hand: the ground would becoming up at me. I suddenly imagined myself falling without a parachute, myarms and legs spread out like a cat. I would let out such a shout! I could justimagine howling in the face of death, and it made me laugh. The parachutists

look at me sympathetically: the umpire was having hysterics. But with me itwas not hysteria: it was simply funny.

The blue light above the baggage hatch flickered nervously.

'Stand! Get down!'

The first paratrooper, Bald Tarzan, crouched down with his right legforward to steady himself. Brother Yevlampius leant heavily on him with hiswhole body. The third man lay on the back of the second man, and so thewhole group formed a single unit to await the signal to jump. When the signalcame those behind leant on those in front and the whole lot went out throughthe wide hatch almost at the same time. It was all right for them. But no onewas going to give me a push.

The huge doors of the hatch moved aside with only a sHght noise. I felt theicy-cold wind in my face. There was no moon that night, but the snow wasdazzingly bright. Things were as clear as dayhght. There was the groundunderneath; the bushes and undergrowth seemed to have gone mad, rushingpast in a wild gallop. We were off.

Come on men, get going!

Mankind had devised nothing worse than this. Wild eyes flashed past me. Asiren howled like a dying animal. Its howl hurt my ears, driving fear deepinside me. Faces were distorted. Everyone was shouting the frightful words:*We're off!' There was no getting out of the way, no way of resisting thepressure from behind. The ones in front had landed in a freezing mist. Thewind was tipping everyone upside down. Away! Those coming behind, sweptalong by some herd instinct, landed in a black swirl of snow. I reachedupwards and floated out into the sort of freezing fog that decent people don'tgo into. Devils and witches on a broomstick, and Viktor Suvorov with hisparachute.

In a low-level jump everthing happens at once: head down, frost

whippingyour face till it burns, legs in the air, wind in your chest under your fur jacket,the shock to your legs as you land, the rough lines of the parachute across yourface again, gloves and sleeves full of snow to the elbows and beginning to melt.Quite sickening.

We buried the parachutes in the snow and scattered some evil smelling stuffaround them to keep the dogs off. The whole of the local police force, the KGBand units of the interior ministry were all involved in the exercise. They had allbeen thrown into action against our unfortunate groups. But we had our handstied. If it had been a real war we would have seized a few personnel carriers orcars and skirted the district. But it wasn't a real war, and we were not allowedto commandeer transport. There was a draconian order: just on our feet, awayfrom the dogs.

We had short, wide skis, with real fox-fur on the underside. They were easyto drop by parachute. They would slide forward but not slip back: the furprevented them from going back. Skis like that often left no trace, especiallyon tightly packed snow. They were so wide that they did not sink in. Theycould also be used to make a httle hide-away in the snow, with the fur to the

inside, so that you could take it in turn to sleep. But most important was thatthey should not get iced up or covered with a sheet of frozen snow.

By the morning we were completely exhausted. We had marched for threehours away from the dropping zone and had concealed our tracks. Tunics wetthrough, faces red, sweat running down our bodies. Our hearts were beating fitto burst. Our tongues were hanging out like dogs' in the heat. It was always likethat at the beginning. By the fourth or fifth day we would be used to it andwould be walking like machines. But the first day was always very hard. Thefirst night and the two following days were awful. After that it would get better.

ˆCommander - there are dogs barking in the village. Not a good sign. Meansthere are strangers there.'

That was quite evident. Who on earth would disturb the village dogs in sucha remote spot and so early in the morning?

*We'll go round it. Take to the left.'

To the left there's a KGB ambush. Over there in that little wood.

Look,commander, birds are circling over the wood.'

He was right. Who had disturbed them in such a hard frost? Birds shouldnow be perched, silent and still, on the branches, covered in hoar frost. Ofcourse we couldn't go that way, so there was nothing for it but to take the paththrough the gullies and the fallen trees where ordinary people wouldn't go.That way was only for wolves, and for Spetsnaz paratroopers.

'Ready? On your way then.'

The pace was cruel - eight kilometres an hour.

Evening. Frost even harder. Sixty-seven kilometres in a day. Only twobreaks. It was time to lie down again in the snow.

*No way, you scroungers,' the commander said, encouragingly. 'You shouldhave slept yesterday.' He was in a bad temper. The group wasn't keeping upthe pace. The men were also in a bad mood. It was getting dark, and that wasbad too. In the daytime the group could occasionally take cover in the snow, inthe undergrowth or marshland, and rest a while. But at night that neverhappened. The night-time was made for work. Like prostitutes, we werenight-birds. And, if you didn't get a rest in the daytime, you wouldn't get oneat night.

'Don't put snow in your mouths!' The commander was very stern. 'Or I'llflatten you!'

He wasn't talking to me. His threats were directed at Genghis Khan andSmoothing Iron. My position put restraints on me. I was an umpire. Nobodywas allowed to put snow in his mouth, but particularly an umpire. If I hadn'tbeen an umpire I would certainly have swallowed some of the white slush on

the quiet. I would probably have stuffed handfuls of it into my mouth. Sweatwas pouring off my brow. It was a good thing my head was shaven, otherwisemy hair would have been all stuck together. Our tunics were steaming on ourbacks. Everything was soaked with sweat and then caught by the frost. Ourouter jackets had gone as stiff as boards. Orange rings danced before our eyes.The group was not maintaining the right pace. Don't eat the snow! If you do,I'll flatten you! Better look down at the points of your skis. If you look far aheadyou simply pass out. But if you look down you are hypnotised, you carry onmechanically and the ever-retreating horizon doesn't

drive you mad.

*Come on, you lazy skunks!' the commander shouted savagely. *Look outahead! We're running into an ambush! Negative didn't notice the light on theleft. Watch yourself. Negative, or I'll knock your teeth out with my ski stick!'

The group knew that their commander was not given to making jokes. Hewould do it.

*Keep going, rabble!'

The sun rose blood-red across the world. Its ragged, impudent rays skippedacross the tips of the fir trees through a freezing mist. There was a hard crispfrost in the forest clearings.

We were resting in a fir plantation for the second night running, and waitingfor the return of a patrol we had sent on ahead. All our faces were white,bloodless, corpse-like, and our legs were throbbing. In this situation it was bestto put them up so that the blood drained out of them. The radio operators lay inthe snow with their feet resting on their containers, and others had alsomanaged to get their feet up somehow. It was now more than twenty-fourhours since we had been dropped, and we had been on the move all the time,stopping only every three or four hours for fifteen or twenty minutes. Two menguarded the stopping place and two others went ahead, while the rest lay downand went straight to sleep. Karl de la Duchesse lay there with his head thrownback and steam rising slowly from his unbuttoned tunic. A snowflakedescended gently on his exposed throat and slowly melted. My eyelids weresticking together, and felt as if they had grit under them. I would have liked torelax, close my eyes and not open them for a few hours.

The group commander was rubbing his chin - a bad sign. He looked verygrim. So did his deputy, the Fist. Five Spetsnaz groups were approaching thecommunications centre of the Tank Army from various directions at the sametime. Our orders were quite straightforward: whoever reached the communi-cations centre before three in the morning would attack it at 3.40. Those whodid not arrive by the agreed time would not go into battle but would go roundthe centre in a big arc and carry on to the next objective. Our group had notarrived on time. That was why the commander was looking grim. In thedistance we could hear explosions and long bursts of automatic fire. Thatmeant that they were close, that they had taken an attack head-on. Face to face.

At least three groups had made it. But even if only one group got there in time,if it managed to dispose of the guard and smash its way into the communicationscentre at the end of a cold uncomfortable night, the operation would still becounted a total success. One group could do a great deal against a communi-cations centre set up in nice warm cabins, against bespectacled, overweightsignals troops, both men and women, and against dissolute telephone oper-ators also of both sexes eaten up by idleness and lechery.

One felt sorry for the conmiander because not all his troops had managed toreach that tempting target. He was confident that the group belonging to thelieutenant we called 'Angry' had arrived dead on time. And sergeant Akl hadprobably brought his men in in good time, too. Akl - that was Akula, theShark. The sergeant's teeth were sharp and strong but uneven, as if they wereinto two rows. That was why he was called the Shark. But perhaps not onlybecause of that. Our conmiander ground his teeth now. It was obvious that hewasn't going to let the group relax today. Keep going, rabble.

We were sleeping. It was the eleventh day after the drop. In daylight wecouldn't stick our heads out: the sky was full of heUcopters. All the roads werecordoned off, and there was an ambush at the edge of every wood. We cameacross a lot of phoney objectives: missile batteries, conununication centres andcommand posts. The Spetsnaz groups attacked them, but got caught in thetrap. The battalion had already lost dozens of its groups. We didn't know howmany. Supplies were dropped to us every night: ammunition, explosives, foodand sometimes liquor. Such concern indicated only one thing: there were onlya few of us left. In the last few days our group had come across a radio-relay linkwhich the staff had not known about before. By using directional receivers andtransmitting aerials, the group had detected an important communicationscentre and a conmiand post in the rear. On the fifth day of the exercise thegroup had gone on the air for the first time to announce its discovery. For that itreceived congratulations from the commanding officer of the 13th Army andan order to leave that area. They were probably softening it up with missiles oraircraft. On the seventh day the group linked up with four others, thus forminga unit under a captain known unkindly as the Useless Extra. The whole unitthen made a successful attack on an aerodrome in full daylight just as a fightersquadron was taking off. The unit got away without losses and dispersed intosmall groups. For the time being our 43rd group did not exist, but divided intotwo: the 431st and the 432nd. Then they were reunited. But it was still

notpossible to take effective action, because of the helicopters in the sky, theroadblocks on every side, the ambushes in the woods and the traps set near thetargets. None the less we were doing our job: the Eighth Guards Tank Armywas almost completely paralysed, and instead of engaging in battle it was tryingto catch us behind the lines.Daylight was fading. Nobody had bothered us during the day and we had

had a rest. Our group had so far not been caught because our commander wasas cunning as a snake. That, presumably, was why they called him the Snake.He had found an ammunition store belonging to our opponents, and that waswhere we spent our days. It served as our base, and we were able to keep all ourheavy equipment there. At night some members of the group, travelling light,would carry out daring raids far from the base and then return by morning. Allthe groups which had taken cover in the dense forest had been destroyed longago. But not us, so far. It was difficult for our opponents to beheve that ourbase was hidden under their very noses. Now the hehcopters did not bother us,and as for the ambushes and roadblocks, you simply had to be very careful.

'Are you ready, men?'

The group was ready, skis adjusted and belts tightened.

'Jump about a bit.'

Before setting out you always had to jirnip up and down, to make sure thatnothing rattled or clattered.

'Time to go. Carry on.'

'Listen, Chopin, just imagine we're fighting a real war. The deputy comman-der is killed and the commander himself is wounded in the leg. If we take himalong with us we're all finished; if we abandon him it will also be the end of thegroup. The enemy will make him talk, even if they have to cut his liver out.There's no provision for evacuating the wounded in Spetsnaz. So just imagine,Chopin, that you have taken over command of the group - what are you goingto do with the wounded commander?'

Chopin took out of the Uttle pocket on the sleeve of his tunic a disposablesyringe. It was known as 'Bhssful death'.

'That's right, Chopin, absolutely right. In wartime the only way we haveof surviving is to kill off our wounded ourselves.'

And I entered another good mark in the umpire's register.

It was the seventeenth day after the drop. There were only five or six groupsstill operating, including ours. The Shark's group and Angry's group had beencaptured a long time ago. The commander of the 43rd knew this through somespecial sense. Angry and the Shark were both his friends and his rivals.Lieutenant Snake was probably thinking about them now and smiling quietlyto himself.

'Ready? Jump about. Time to go. Off you go, men.'

He no longer called his soldiers 'rabble'.

Chapter Four

It was a wonderful feeling to walk on thick red carpets after being away fortwenty-three days. I was no longer used to quiet or carpets or warmth. In fact, Ihad returned to the wild, which is something human beings do very quickly,slipping easily back into the animal world. But it was quiet and agreeable in thecorridors of HQ and the people there were well fed, well turned out and cleanlyshaved. No place there for the hoarse wheezing voice of the commander or theimpatient yelping of dogs about to be let off the leash.

Our 43rd group was among the last to be captured. It was surrounded anddriven into a ravine. Just like real war. And there were real dogs, thosefour-legged friends of man that did not understand the difference between areal hunt and an exercise It was all one to them.

One soldier, known as the Whip for his toughness and resilience, was so thinand agile that he managed to slip out of the trap. He was the first to be separatedfrom the group and driven towards the river on which the ice was alreadybreaking up. They thought they would surround him on the river bank. But hethrew away his tunic and his automatic and swam between the chunks of ice.They didn't bother to send a hehcopter after one man, and the dogs wouldn'ttake to the water - they were too smart. Four days later Whiplash arrived backat his battaHon's barracks, dressed in a dark grey policeman's greatcoat that hehad stolen and thinner than ever.

For that the Whip was promoted to the rank of sergeant and awarded

fifteendays' leave. He was by no means the only such man in the battalion. One by onethey made their way back to the battalion on broken skis and with their tunicstorn to bits, and sometimes with bleeding wounds.

When we were captured, they took us off to a barracks of an MVD regiment,where we were greeted like old friends. They gave us a bath and some food andlet us sleep as long as we liked. One complete barrack building had been madeavailable for the captured groups and the regiment's medical section wasdealing only with us.

In the bath house the MVD troops eyed us with admiration and some alarm:we were just skeletons.

'You've hit on a pretty tough service, my friends.'

We did not argue. It was tough. But each year in Spetsnaz counted aseighteen months' service. If you served ten years you were credited withfifteen. Similarly you received half as much pay again, and you were paid forparachute jumps and for every day on exercises. And we could soon put on

some weight. So I slept it all off and had a good rest. And now I was treadingthe plush carpets again. The other staff officers greeted me with jokes:

Tell me, Viktor, how did you manage to lose so much weight?'

'Look at our spy - where did he get that sun tan?'

My face was tanned from the frost, the wind and the merciless winter sun.My Hps were black and cracked. My nose had peeled.

'How about coming skiing on Sunday, Viktor!'

That was a cruel joke that I found difficult to take. Indeed, ever since servingin the Spetsnaz, what I hate most of all in the world is people who, of theirown free will, put on skis simply because they've nothing better to do.

I was on my way to see the Chief of Intelhgence.

'May I enter? Comrade Lt-colonel.... Excuse me '

Kravtsov now had not two, but three stars on his epaulettes.

'Comrade colonel - senior lieutenant Suvorov reporting for duty on returnfrom manoeuvres.'

'Greetings.'

'Permit me to congratulate you.'

'Thank you. Sit down.' He eyed my burnt cheekbones. 'They certainlytrimmed you down a bit. Have you slept it off?'

'Yes.'

'There's a lot of work to do. The world has changed a lot in your absence.Try to bring yourself up to date as quickly as possible. Have you forgotteneverything on the exercise?'

'I tried to go over what I know in my head.'

'Shall I test you?'

'Sure.'

'Spangdahlem.'

'Spangdahlem is a US Air Force base in Western Germany, 25 kilometresnorth of Trier. The 52nd tactical fighter wing is permanently based there.There are 72 F-4 fighters. One runway, 3,050 metres long, 45 metres wide.The wing consists of '

'Okay. Off you go.'

The world changes at a breathtaking speed. I had not had any access toinformation for twenty-three days, and in front of me were bulging folderswith intelligence summaries, orders and ciphered messages. In twenty-threedays, the world had changed out of all recognition. I realised that the Chief ofIntelligence had spared my feelings and had asked me an easy question aboutan unmoving object, an air base. If he had asked me about the 6th PanzerGrenadier division of the Bundeswehr, for example, I would certainly havebeen in a very tricky situation. You have to follow the situation continually, orelse you find yourself peddling out-of-date information.

So I went through it all: 'Top Secret—Agents of the Belorussian military

district have noticed a strengthening of the guard over the launching sites for

Pershing missiles in Western Germany' Top Secret—The 5th department

of the Intelligence directorate of the Baltic Fleet has recorded a completereplacement of the coding system in governmental and military communi-cations channels in Denmark' Top Secret—Agents of the General Staffs

InteUigence network have discovered' Top Secret—Agents of the 11th

Guards Army of the Baltic mihtary district in Western Germany have observed

work on the building of silos for nuclear mines' Top Secret—I order the

Chief of the Second Chief Directorate of the General Staff, Chiefs of InteUi-gence of GSFG, SGV, ZGV,* of the Baltic, Belorussian and Carpathianmilitary districts to give special attention to the collection of information aboutthe stationing of nuclear mines on the territory of the German FederalRepublic: Chief of the General Staff Army-General Kulikov.'

Twenty-three days ago no one had heard anything about nuclear mines. Butnow a tremendous effort was being made through the network of agents todiscover what this mysterious self-defence system in the West amounted to.The Soviet Army was also looking different: 'Secret—Results of experimentalexercises carried out by the 8th Air Assault brigade of the Trans-Baikal

mihtary district' ... there were no such brigades only 23 days ago Top

Secret—I order you to take into your armament ATGW known as"Malyutka - M" with a guiding system based on two fixed points: Minister of

Defence Marshal of the Soviet Union A. Grechko' Tor officers oiSpetsnaz

only - Inquiry into the circumstances in which foreign trainees died in theOdessa centre for training of Spetsnaz ... in the course of training exercises

with 'puppets' ... I order you to increase supervision and security Give

special attention to '

I read that last order three times over. It made it quite clear how one had todeal with a 'puppet' and how it was to be looked after and preserved. But it wasnot clear what exactly a 'puppet' was.

It was not easy to train foreign fighters for Spetsnaz. We - members of SovietSpetsnaz - would go into action in wartime, but the foreigners were in actionalready all over the world. They went fearlessly to their deaths for theirglorious ideals, never suspecting that they were actually fighting for ourSpetsnaz. They were amazing people! We trained them, spent milHons on theirupkeep and risked the reputation of our state for them, yet they continued tobelieve they were independent. It was very difficult to deal with such people.As they came to us for training they brought with them the West's amazing airof unconcern. They were an naive as children and as magnanimous as heroes ofa novel. Their hearts were full of fire, their heads packed with prejudices. Itwas said that some of them reckoned you shouldn't kill people during a

* The Soviet forces in Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

wedding; others that you shouldn't kill during a funeral. Extraordinarypeople! That's what cemeteries were for - to have corpses in them!

The Spetsnaz Training Centre soon knocked this romantic nonsense out ofthem. They were also torn to bits by dogs and forced to run through fire. Theywere taught not to fear heights, the sight of blood, high speeds and, above all,death. These men often demonstrate to the world their contempt for death -and for other people's lives - when they make a hghtning raid to seize anaircraft or an embassy. It is the Spetsnaz Centre which has taught them to kill -skilfully, calmly and with rehsh. But what did they have in their trainingconcealed behind the term 'puppet'?

The Soviet system of preserving secrets has been well thought out, refinedand perfected. We keep our secrets by destroying anyone capable of talking toomuch and by the total concealment of a colossal quantity of factual infor-mation. Often not very secret. We keep our secrets by a special system ofpersonnel selection, a system of special passes, and a system of vertical andhorizontal barriers to prevent

access to secrets. We keep our secrets by meansof dogs, security guards, special signals, safes and seals and steel doors and anall-embracing censorship. In addition we keep them by means of a speciallanguage or jargon. Even if someone were to get into our safes he wouldn'tunderstand very much of what he found there.

When we are talking about our enemies, we use the normal words whicheveryone understands: missile, nuclear warhead, chemical weapon, com-mando, spy. But if we are talking about our own affairs the same things havedifferent names: the goods, CG, special weapon, Spetsnaz, special source.Many terms have a variety of meanings. Chistka, or 'purge', may mean in somecircumstances expulsion from the Party, but in others the destruction ofmillions of people. A commonly used word may have a great many synonymsin the jargon. Soviet commando troops may be known by the general term ofSpetsnaz but also as 'deep reconnaissance', 'tourists', 'nosey parkers', or'raiders'. So what does the word 'puppet' conceal in our language? Do they use'puppets' also in training Soviet troops, or are they only for foreign trainees?Did the 'puppets' exist previously, or have they been recently introduced, likethe air assault brigades?

I closed the folder, firmly determined to find out the meaning of this strangeterm. There was only one way to do it: to give the impression that I knew whatit was all about, and then in the course of casual conversation someone whoreally did know might let out a httle more than was allowed. And one crumbwas often enough to guess the answer.

The 296th independent reconnaissance battaUon of Spetsnaz had been hiddenskilfully and with a certain taste. The 13th Army had a signal regiment whichtook care of communications for the HQ and command posts. Secrets of greatimportance to the state passed through the regiment, which was therefore

specially guarded. But there was a special area within the regiment's territoryin which our reconnaissance battalion lived. All the paratroopers wore theuniform of communications troops. All the vehicles in the battalion wereclosed vans, the same as those used by the signals troops, so that an outsiderwould see simply a signals regiment and nothing more. What is more, evenwithin the regiment the majority of the officers and men believed that therewere three of the usual signals battalions and one unusual one, especiallysecret, which probably handled governmental traffic.

Within the Spetsnaz battahon itself there were quite a few secrets. Many ofthe men believed that there were three parachute companies made up ofordinary, though strong and tough, soldiers. It was only later that I found outthat there was more to it than that. Apart from the three companies thereexisted another special platoon made up of professionals. It was stationed inanother place, far away from the battalion and intended for carrying outespecially difficult tasks. I discovered its existence only because, as aninformation officer, I had to instruct those people in problems of my owntrade: the correct and rapid detection of important targets on enemy territory.The first time I travelled to the special platoon I was a Httle alarmed. ColonelKravtsov drove me there personally and introduced me.

'See if you can guess what kind of camouflage we have thought up for thisplatoon.'

That's beyond my abilities, comrade colonel. I've got no facts to base anyguess on.'

*But try all the same. It's an intelligence test for you. Form an idea of them,which is what your imagination is for, and try and hide them, imaginingyourself to be Chief of Intelligence in the 13th Army.'

They must have a very accurate idea of the territory in which they will haveto operate, and therefore they must frequently travel abroad. They must be infirst-class training... I would be inclined, comrade colonal, to attach them to asports team. That would provide the camouflage and the opportunity to travelabroad '

'Correct...' he laughed. 'All very simple. They form a team in the army'ssports organisation-parachutists, runners, sharp-shooters, boxers, wrestlers.Every army and flotilla has such a team. Every military district, fleet and groupof troops has even stronger and even better trained sports teams. We do notspare resources when it comes to sport. But where would you hide yoursportsmen's training centre?'

'In Dubrovice.'

He was a good intelligence officer, and so he kept control of himself. Therewas only a slight sound from his teeth and the veins on his cheeks twitched aHttle.

'Why in Dubrovice?'

'In our much loved 13th Army there is only one penal battalion and that's inDubrovice, in the military prison. Young soldiers from our

division have oftenfetched up there. The fences are high, the dogs fierce and there are many rows

of barbed wire. All you have to do is to cut off a section of the camp inside andyou can put any secret body you like inside it. People who have to go there canbe taken in prison vans and nobody would be any the wiser....'

*In our 13th Army there are quite a few well guarded places. The APRTB,*for example....'

'But in the APRTB, comrade colonel, there is nowhere to hide a'puppet'
'

He gave me a long, searching look, but said nothing.

It is only on autumn nights that there are so many stars. Only on a coldSeptember night can you see them so clearly, looking like silver studs on blackvelvet.

How many of them there are looking at us out of the cold dark emptiness!When you are looking at the Great Bear, not far from the bright star at the bendin the handle you can make out a very small star. Perhaps it is by no means assmall as all that, but simply very far away. It may be a tremendous heavenlybody with dozens of huge planets round it. Maybe it is a galaxy with millions ofother bodies

We are of course not alone in the universe. There are millions of planets inouter space like our own. What grounds have we for considering ourselves anexception? We are no exception. We are like all the others. Only the shape andcolour of our eyes may be different. The inhabitants of some planets have blueeyes, like Colonel Kravtsov's, while others have green eyes, triangular with atint of emerald. But that is, apparently, where the differences end. In all otherrespects we are identical - all of us animals. There are of course different kindsof beasts: thinking, civilised ones and those that do not think. The firstdistinguish themselves from the second by the fact that they endeavour tocamouflage their animal nature. When we have plenty of food, warmth andfemale company we can allow ourselves to be kindly and sympathetic. But themoment nature or fate faces us with the question point-blank - who is to dieand who is to survive?— we immediately plunge our yellow fangs into thethroat of our neighbour, brother or mother.

We are all animals. I certainly am, and I make no effort to conceal it. And theinhabitant of the twelfth planet of the orange body lost in the depths of thegalaxy without a name - he is also an animal and also tries to appear good andkindly. The Chief of Intelhgence in the 13 th

Army Colonel Kravtsov is also ananimal. He is a wild beast such as you rarely come across. There he sits at thecamp-fire stirring the embers with a stick. Not very tall, very trim, with ahandsome young face, slighdy disdainful. He has a broad, engaging smile,

* APRTB - the Russian initials standing for Army Mobile Missile-Technical Base, a unit includedin all-arm and tank armies which handles the transportation, protection and technical servicingof missiles for the missile brigade of an Army and for missile battahons of divisions forming partof that Army.

though the corners of his mouth are always turned down - a mark of hiscapacity for restraint and precise calculation. His look is devastating andpenetrating, forcing anyone who meets it to blink and turn away. He hasdehcate hands, not proletarian ones. His colonel's epaulettes suit him well.People of his kind sometimes have the strangest habits. Some, I have heard,collect rusty kopeks. I wonder what our colonel amuses himself with? For meand the rest of us he is a puzzle. We know surprisingly httle about him, whilehe knows all there is to know about all of us. He's an animal. Small,bloodthirsty and deadly dangerous. He knows where he's going and neverturns aside from his path. I know what his guiding star is. It is called Power.

As he sat at the camp-fire the red flames played upon his manly features. Hisdark, clean profile. Shades of red. Nothing more. No sudden change of mind.No compromises. If I made just one mistake he would get rid of me, crush me.If I were to deceive him he would be able to tell by my eyes - his intellect wasthat powerful.

'Suvorov, did you want to ask something?'

We were alone by the camp-fire in a httle ravine in the endless steppe. Ourvehicle was hidden far away in the undergrowth and the driver had been givenpermission to sleep. We had a long autumn night ahead of us.

Tes, comrade colonel, I have long wanted to ask you You have under

your command hundreds of intelligent, promising officers with excellent

training and refined manners But I am a peasant, I haven't read many of

the books you talk about... it's difficult for me in your company ... I am not

interested in the writers and artists whom you admire So why did you

choose me?'

He spent a long time fiddling with the kettle, apparently debating whether togive me the usual reply, commenting on my diligence and originality of mind,or to tell me the truth. He was cooking up a murderous drink—a mixture ofcoffee and cognac. If you drank it you didn't sleep for twenty-four hours.

*I will tell you the truth, Viktor, because you are capable of understanding ityourself, because you are difficult to deceive, and because you ought to knowit. Our world is very cruel. You can survive in it only by scrambling upwards.If you stop you slide down and you will be trampled underfoot by those who areclimbing up over your bones. Our world is a bloody uncompromising battlebetween two poHtical systems, but at the same time it is a struggle betweenindividuals, and in that struggle everyone needs help and support. I needhelpers who are ready for anything, ready to risk their lives in the cause ofvictory. But I don't need helpers who will betray me at the most difficultmoment. To achieve that there is only one way: to choose helpers from the verylowest level. You owe everything to me, and if I'm kicked out you will bekicked out too. If I lose everything so will you. I pulled you up, I picked youout of the crowd, not because of your abihty but because you are one of thecrowd. Nobody needs you. If something happens to me you will find yourselfagain in the crowd, without any of your power and privileges. This way ofchoosing assistants and bodyguards is as old as the hills. It has been used by all

rulers. If you betray me you will lose everything. That is exactly how I waspicked up out of the dust. My protector is on the way up and is dragging mealong with him, counting on my support in every situation. If he bites the dust,who will need me?'

Tour protector is Lieutenant-general Obaturov?'

*Yes. He took me into his group when he was a major and I was a Ueutenant... not a very successful one.'

*But he is also working for someone. He is also being pulled upwards?'

*0f course. Only that is none of your business. Rest assured that you are inthe right group and that General Obaturov has extremely powerful protectorsin the General Staff. But Usten, Suvorov, I know you pretty well now, and Ihave the feeling that that was not the question that was bothering you. What'sthe matter?'

Tell me about the Aquarium.'

Tou know about that too? You couldn't have heard that word used, whichmeans that you have seen it somewhere. Let me think and I'll tell you whereyou might have seen it.'

*0n the back of the portrait.'

*So that's it. Let me advise you, Suvorov, never to ask anybody about it. TheAquarium takes too serious a view of its secrets. You only have to ask thatquestion to find yourself hanging on a hook. No, I'm not joking. By the neck orby the ribs, and upside down. If I were to tell you about the Aquarium, youmight tell someone else and he might do the same. Then the time might comewhen things began to move in the opposite direction. One man is arrested, theyfind out from him where he heard that word, he names you, and you point thefinger at me.'

*Do you believe that if they were to torture me I would give you away?'

*I have no doubt about it at all, and you shouldn't either. Some fools say thatthere are people so strong-willed that they can stand being tortured and othersso weak that they can't take it. That's nonsense. There are good interrogators

and bad ones. In the Aquarium the interrogators are good If you are put on

the 'conveyor' you will confess to everything, including things that neverhappened. But... but I am confident, Viktor, that you and I will not land upon the conveyor, and for that reason I'm going to tell you a httle about theAquarium.'

*What sort of fish are there swimming there?'

'There's only one kind there - piranhas.'

'Have you ever worked in the Aquarium?'

'No, I was never accorded that honour. Maybe in the future.... The

peoplethere probably think that my teeth are not yet sharp enough. So Usten. TheAquarium is the central building of the 2nd Chief Directorate of the GeneralStaff, that is, of the Chief Intelhgence Directorate, the GRU. Mihtaryintelligence has existed under various names ever since October 21,1918. TheRed Army was then already a huge and powerful force, administered by thegeneral staff - the brains of the Army. But the staff reacted too slowly and

uncertainly because the organism it commanded was blind and deaf. Infor-mation about the enemy was provided by the Cheka. It was just as if the brainwas receiving information, not from its own eyes and ears but from the lips ofanother person. What is more, the Cheka people always looked upon reportsto the Army as something of secondary importance. It couldn't be otherwise:the secret police has its own priorities; the general staff has different ones.And however much information the general staff received from elsewhere itwould never be enough. Just imagine, if there were some major failure, whowas going to be held responsible? The general staff could always say thatinformation about the enemy was insufficient and that that was the cause ofthe failure. And they would always be in the right, because however muchinformation was collected the chief of the general staff would always be able toask another million questions to which there is no answer. That is why it wasdecided to hand over military intelligence to the general staff and to let theCGS handle it, so that if there was not enough information about the enemy itwould be the fault of the general staff itself.'

*And the KGB never tried to take control of the GRU?'*It was always trying, and it's still trying. Yezhov once succeeded in doingit: he was at the same time head of the NKVD and of military intelligence.Because of that it became necessary to destroy him immediately. He had toomuch power in his hands. He had estabhshed a monopoly over all secretwork, and that was a very alarming monopoly for the top leadership. As longas there are at least two secret organisations fighting each other behind thescenes there is no need to fear a conspiracy within one of them. So long asthere are two organisations the quality of the work is maintained because ofthe competition. The day one organisation swallows the other will mark theend of the Politburo. But the Politburo won't let that happen. The scope ofthe KGB's activity is limited by the activity of hostile organisations. Withinthe country the MVD does very good work. The MVD and the KGB areready to gobble each other up. Apart from that there is yet another secretpolice operating within the country - the

People's Control. Stalin becamedictator after having been head of that very organisation.'

I remained silent, chewing over the significance of what had been said. Thelong night was still ahead. Some thirty metres away from us, hidden in anosier bed, was a big inflated model of a Tershing' missile - an exact copy ofthe American original. On the previous night a complete Spetsnaz battalionhad been dropped in small groups far away from this place. It was acompetition. They had to cover 307 kilometres with five control points alongthe route: missiles, radar, HQ. The group which first covered the route,having found all the targets and reported their exact position, were to be givenleave and each soldier was to be presented with a gold watch. All the privatesin the winning group would be made corporals, and the sergeants would bemade senior sergeants. Staff officers of the intelligence department werekeeping watch over the progress of the groups. Kravtsov himself usuallyfollowed the competition from a hehcopter. But on this occasion he had

decided for some reason to be at one of the control points and had taken me ashis assistant.

'Sounds as if someone's coming.'

'We'll talk later.'

There was the sound of gravel being trodden underfoot and of stones rollingdownhill, and a huge shadow crept Hke a snake down through the ravine. Inthe darkness the camp-fire nearly bUnded the broad-shouldered paratrooper.He looked closely into our faces and, recognising Kravtsov, reported:'Comrade colonel: the 29th group of the 2nd Spetsnaz company. SergeantPolishchuk in command.'

'Greetings, sergeant.'

The sergeant turned to his group and gave a quiet whistle. There was thesound of paratroopers shding down the hillside. Two of them took up positionon a ridge as look-outs and defence. The radio operator quickly put up hisaerials. Two others spread out a groundsheet beneath which the group'scipher clerk would perform his mysteries. Ordinary mortals were not allowedto know how he prepared his messages for transmission, and for that reason healways worked under cover of a groundsheet. In war conditions the groupcommander answers with his hfe for the safety of the codes and the cipherclerk. If

the group runs into danger the commander has to kill the cipher clerkand destroy the codes and cipher machine. If he doesn't do it not only he butthe whole group answer with their lives.

Now the message was ready. We could all see what it was: an ordinaryphotographic film with a few rows of little holes punched in it. The messagewas put into the radio transmitter, but the set was not yet switched on ortuned. The radio operator looked at his chronometer, then he pressed a knob.The radio set switched on, tuned itself automatically, drew the piece of filminto its interior and immediately spat it out the other side. A few httle lamps onthe set immediately went out. The whole transmission had not lasted morethan a second. In effect the radio shoots its charge of information out like agun.

The cipher clerk put a match to the film which disappeared in a flash,hissing fiercely. The film appeared to be quite ordinary. It burnt up asquickly as the radio had transmitted the ciphered message.

'Ready? Jump about. Time to go. Quick march.'

Sergeant Polishchuk was a very demanding commander. He would be verytough with his group and drive them on without stopping. Because you cancount your chickens only at the finishing post. All was going well for themoment. But what if the group collapsed in the first couple of hundredkilometres? The group commanders were given considerable powers. Thatwas the point of the competition. They could halt the group if they wished, orlet them sleep, or let them rest every ten minutes. But if you fetched up among

the last groups you lost your sergeant's stripes and were reduced to the ranks.There were plenty of takers for your sergeant's position.

'Comrade colonel, the 11th group of the 1st company. Commander SergeantStolyar.'

'Greetings, sergeant. Carry on and pay no attention to our presence here.'

'Very good. Rhinoceros and Ugly Duckling - keep an eye open!'

'Okay.'

'Blevantin!'

'Here, sergeant.'

'Contact HQ.'

'Very good.'

'Ready? Jump. Time to be off. Quick march!'

The groups started arriving in a stream. It was always like that withcompetitions. A few groups would dash on far ahead of the others; they wouldbe followed by the main body at short intervals or no interval at all; and finallythe laggards, the ones who had got lost or were already exhausted, wouldarrive. Some of them would take a rest by our camp-fire for a whole hour.Others would stay for two. Some would stop simply to estabUsh contact,transmit their message and carry on further. Alongside us several groups werepreparing a simple supper. It was forbidden to light a fire during exercises, sothe paratroopers cooked their food over a spirit fire. But on competitions youcould light a fire. The most important points in competitions were preciseorientation, speed, map reading and communications. The rest was lessimportant.

The smell of cooking reached us from the camp-fire. The paratroopers werecooking a chicken. They had their own special way of doing it. They wouldclean it out, chop off the head and claws, but leave the feathers. Then theywould cover it with a coating of wet clay and put it into the fire. Hence thesmell. It would soon be ready to eat. A paratrooper carries no utensils, so thathe has to cook in clay. When the bird is ready they crack off the clay and with itall the feathers, leaving the chicken in its own fat, ready for the table.

'Comrade colonel, be our guest.'

'Thank you. And where did you get the chicken from?'

'It's a wild one, comrade colonel. A stray.'

In the course of competitions the Spetsnaz troops may come across a 'wild'pig, pullet or cockerel. Sometimes they find 'wild' potatoes, 'wild' tomatoesand cucumbers, or 'wild' corn. Another group was cooking up some corn in ahuge saucepan.

'Where did you get that saucepan?'

'Well, it's like this: it was lying at the roadside. We reckoned we shouldn'tlet it be wasted. Try our corn! It's very good.'

It was Kravtsov's rule to accept invitations from his men as gratefully as heaccepted them from the chief of staff of the District or the C-in-C himself. Hemade no distinctions. The atmosphere around the fire was relaxed.

The colonel was a great one for jokes. The dirtier the better. For him the

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Spetsnaz soldiers were wild men, capable of great deeds and respecting fewother men. They were ready to obey any officer put in charge of them, but theydid not respect every one, and a Spetsnaz soldier, with his animal cunning, hadthousands of ways of letting his commander know whether he respected him ornot. So why did they respect Kravtsov? Because he did not conceal or try toconceal his animal nature. The troops were convinced that human nature wasbasically vicious and incorrigible. They had good reason. Every day theyrisked their lives and every day they had an opportunity to observe people onthe brink of death. So they divided everybody into the good and the bad. Agood person in their eyes was one who did not conceal the animal seated withinhim. But a person who tried to appear good was dangerous. The mostdangerous were those who not only paraded their good quahties but who alsobelieved within themselves they were indeed good people. The most loathsomedisgusting criminal might kill a man, ten men or even a himdred. But acriminal will never kill people by the milhon. Milhons are killed only by thosewho consider themselves good. People like Robespierre do not grow out ofcriminals but out of the most worthy and most humane types. The guillotinewas invented not by criminals but by humanists. The most monstrous crimesin the history of mankind were committed by people who did not drink vodka,did not smoke, were not unfaithful to their wives and fed squirrels from thepalms of their hands.

The men whose corn we were then eating were quite sure that a humanbeing could be good only up to a certain point. When life gets difficultgood people become bad and it can happen at the most awkward moment.If you don't want to be caught napping it is better not to have anything todo with good people. Better have dealings with those who are now seen tobe bad. You will at least know what to expect from them when your luckturns. In that sense Colonel Kravtsov was one of them. For example, if ashapely girl came down the street, with buttocks bouncing around likemelons in a bag, the Spetsnaz soldiers would at least rape her visually, if inno other way. But

Colonel Kravtsov did the same, quite unashamedly, andthey respected him for it. The dangerous man is the one who does not stareafter women and who tries to give the impression that he is not interestedin such things. It's among those people that you find secret sadists andmurderers.

Kravtsov was fond of the female sex and made no secret of it. He was alsofond of power, and why should he conceal his feeUngs? He was very fond ofpower - any power. I felt it when I first saw him hitting a 'puppet'. It was theapotheosis of might and merciless power.

What we call a * puppet' is actually a man. A special kind of man for trainingpurposes. For example, you can hit him. But, unUke your partner in a match oryour instructor, a 'puppet' also puts up a fight and may even kill you. That's

the whole point of using them. Our work is very risky and exceptionallyresponsible. Just imagine that in time of war a group oiSpetsnaz who have thetask of slitting the throats of some sleeping enemy soldiers hesitate becausethey are not used to killing or simply because they suddenly experience feelingsof compassion, charity or humanity. They wouldn't carry out their task andthey might perish themselves and wreck a most important operation whichmight cost the lives of thousands of our soldiers. To prevent that happening,they invented the 'puppets'. They invented them a long time ago and havebeen using them in various organisations for more than half a century. In theCheka they are called 'gladiators', in the NKVD Volunteers' and in Smersh'Robinsons'.

A 'puppet' is a criminal who has been condenmed to death. Those who areweak, old, sick, especially dangerous or who know too much are executedimmediately after sentence has been passed. But others have their life extendedby the state and are used for a variety of purposes. The whole of our nuclearindustry has been built by such prisoners and is maintained by them. And thelonger the sentence a man gets, the more dangerous the work. A personcondemned to death is given the most dangerous work. But it is not only therethat such people are employed. They are also used as training material. It suitseverybody. They get their Hves prolonged, and we have an opportunity forreal-life training.

There used to be enough 'gladiators', 'volunteers' and 'Robinsons' foreverybody. Now there's a shortage. Today the number of death

sentencespassed in the whole country is not more than two or three thousand a year. Halfthe people sentenced are disposed of without being put to any useful purpose.At the same time the number of organisations that have a use for people indeath row is considerable: the VPK (the armaments industry), the GCh service(for fitting and servicing warheads), the Fleet (for replacing the active zones ofthe reactors in nuclear-powered submarines), the KGB, the MVD, the GRU,and Spetsnaz.

Because we got only a few 'puppets' sent to us, they had to be kept in use fora long time. This meant that by no means all Spetsnaz could have training fightswith 'puppets', but only specially selected people: certain foreigners, andprofessionals, who are kept on the strength of Spetsnaz and who are beingprepared for the most important tasks.

A fight with a 'puppet' - very often a very tough criminal - is a serious andvery risky business. You can hit him to your heart's content but you mustn'tbreak any bones. But you must also be careful. He doesn't stick to our rules.He fights back. An animal rage burns within him. Sometimes he hides it in aneffort to prolong his wretched life, sometimes he loses control of himself. Hithim, make the most of it! It's not a phoney fight, not a form of onanism. It's areal fight, involving a real risk.

The colonel doesn't have to take any risks, but every time he visits the penalbattalion where our special training centre is hidden away, he puts on atracksuit and visits the training room.

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A little water, nearly half a tin of cofffee, a good portion of brandy, and over thecamp-fire. It needs to be cooked for a long time. The moment it comes to theboil you take it away and then bring it back to the fire. The resultant hquid willmake you want to leap in the air and kick out like a young goat. It puts Ufe intoyou. The fumes tickle your nose, the smell intoxicates like the smell of gunfire.

A grey sky. The dawn is coming. We are once again alone.

'Has the KGB spilled a lot of our blood?'

*Are you thinking of the whole Army or just mihtary intelligence?'

'Both the Army and the GRU.'

'A lot.'

I again remain silent, taking Httle sips at the drink which makes my wholeinsides burn as if from pepper.

'Why did it happen?'

'Because we were too naive. We were serving our country, but the Chekistswere serving themselves.'

'Could it happen again in the future?'

'Yes, if we are as naive as we were.'

He keeps fingering his hot mug in his hands. It seems to me as if he isbalancing my fate on the palm of his hands. It is no accident that he has broughtme to this place. He wants to talk to me alone. It is presumably up to me to saysomething - something he expects from me.

'We shouldn't allow it to happen again. For the sake of our country we don'thave the right to permit the KGB to be all-powerful.' I suddenly felt that I havehit on the right key. 'Before the war the Chekists destroyed our generals andour military inteUigence and by so doing very nearly brought the Soviet state toits knees. For the sake of our motherland we have a duty not to permit it tohappen again!'

'What would you do in my position? Or in the position of General Obaturov?Or General Ogarkov?'

'I would maintain close contact with a group. And I would consider a blowstruck at one of our organisation as a blow at all of us. We need solidarity.'

'Well, let's assume that we have solidarity. Let's assume that we aresupporting each other. Then the KGB or the Party strikes at one of us. Howwould you reply to that? Does everyone resign?'

I stare into the fire. What reply can one make? A military conspiracy is out ofthe question. We have to strike back at our enemies, but the blows have to bestruck out of the blue by unknown people.

'I think, comrade colonel, we would have to take action, not against thewhole of the KGB, but against particular individuals, the most dangerousones....'

'But if I do that in the Carpathian military district everyone will know that'sit's my work. They would soon get their hands on me '

*It's solidarity we need,' I said in an eager whisper. *If they hit our people inSiberia the reply must come in another place.'

'What sort of reply?'

*I don't know. In my view, comrade colonel, we must devise some dirtytricks for the benefit of the enemy so that the Chekists are removed from theirjobs by other Chekists. They also have different groups squabbling amongthemselves.'

*A11 right then, Suvorov, just remember for the rest of your days that thisconversation never took place. You've knocked yourself out with those coffeegrounds and you've been imagining things. Get it into your head once and forall, if you ever come to be arrested, that it's better for you to remain a singleenemy, a loner. If anyone should suspect that you are involved in someconspiracy they will torture you mercilessly in an effort to extract from you thenames of your fellow conspirators. I haven't had anything to say to you. It'sjust that you told me all sorts of nonsense. And now Usten carefully.'

His voice changes completely and so does the expression on his face.

*In a week's time you will be picked out to take over control of a Spetsnazgroup. You will be posted to the Storozhenets training camp. On the secondday of the operation your group will split in two. From that moment you willdisappear. You will make your way alone to Kishinev. You can go by nightusing freight trains. In Kishinev there is a teachers' training college which haslong been famous for its strong nationalism. Here is the slogan which you willwrite on the wall of the college at night.'

He hands me a scrap of cigarette paper.

'You don't speak Moldavian, so you must learn these letters off by heart likehieroglyphics. Do it now. Try and write it down. That's it. Once more. Nowthrow it all into the fire. Remember: you thought it all up yourself. If you getstopped anywhere say you got separated from your group. But nobody will befollowing our groups just now.'

'What size should the letters be?'

'Fifteen to twenty centimetres will be enough to get rid of the chairman ofthe KGB in Moldavia. It's not in our military district but in the Odessa district.Maybe they will suspect the military, but the

Spetsnaz conmiander of theOdessa district is a bitter enemy of the chairman of the Moldavia KGB and itwill be impossible to implicate him.'

'Do you think one slogan will be sufficient to bring down such an importantguy?'

'This is a rather special case. There have already been meetings taking placein the college and underground groups and leaflets. A lot of people have beenarrested and hundreds expelled. They're all scared stiff, and yet the wholething suddenly flares up again. It'll be tough on the KGB boys. And I repeat:you were on your own, you thought it all up yourself. You saw the slogan on awall and learnt it off by heart without knowing what it meant. You haven'tforgotten?'

'No.'

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We were dropped from three thousand metres. On the second day of theoperation the group was divided into two parts. The officers in command of thenewly formed smaller groups knew that from that moment they were actingwithout direct control from above.

Five days later I reported back to Army headquarters. The staff received mewith a lot of cheerful banter. I went straight to the Chief of Intelligence. Ireported that I had lost my bearings and was not able for a long time to find theright course back. With a shght nod of the head and a barely noticable smile Iindicated that the job had been done. A nice clean job.With a little nod he repUed that he had imderstood. But he did not smile.

Three weeks went past. I studied the newspapers carefully. They don't likewriting about dismissals in our press, so they write about new appointments.Of course, they were hardly likely to report appointments within the KGB.But there could also be some reshuffling of officials in the Party machine. Andthat might be evidence of some deeper changes. Articles might appear withhints of what was going on, such as 'Strengthen proletarian internationalism.'But so far there had been nothing either in the national or in the local pressabout the need for greater attention to the problem of nationahsm.

He laid his hand on my shoulder. He always came up to you from behind,silently:

'You're wasting your time. Nothing's going to happen.'

'Why?

'Because what you wrote on the wall will do nobody any harm. It was acompletely neutral sentence.'

'Then why did I do it?'

'So that I could be sure of you.'

'I was under observation all the time?'

'You'll be under observation all your fife. To make sure that you shouldn'thave any silly ideas and you don't rush off to tell tales to people who shouldn'tknow, you will never know exactly whether you are engaged on a genuineoperation or whether it is a carefully prepared trial with dozens of traps in it. If

it turns out you've talked too much, then Don't be offended: you chose

this path yourself. I am treated in exactly the same way. It is better to put aperson to the test than to trust him blindly.'

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He looked at me enquiringly, then poured each of us half a glass of iced vodkaand silently nodded at one of them. I raised the glass to my lips and drank it insilence. Vodka has to be drunk by the glass. It is only then that it reveals itsmagical properties.

*Suvorov, I have been studying you for a long time and trying to understandyou. In my view you are a born criminal, although you've had no training incriminal ways. Don't start objecting -1 know people better than you. I can seeright through you. Drink up.'

*Good health.'

'Have a bit of cucumber.'

The expression on his face was grim. He had clearly managed to drink a gooddeal before my arrival. Which meant he had reason to drink, probably a goodreason. When things were going badly he never drank. If he had some success,then he would drink. But when he had drunk he always became serious, evengloomy. It's exactly the same with me. He had apparently noticed that sometime ago and, by some other, barely noticable signs, he had formed an idea ofmy character by reference to his own. I objected rather feebly, secretlyadmiring the

sharpness of his perception.

*If you, you rogue, were to get mixed up with real criminals you would feelentirely at home with them. And they would take you for one of them. And in afew years you would enjoy real authority in the gang. Drink up.'

He had had a lot of vodka. He had opened a fresh bottle for me, which meantthat he had already drunk a bottle with someone else before I arrived. Maybehe had had other visitors. The shaking of the fork he held in his hand gave thegame away. But his brain was utterly unaffected by alcohol.

There's one thing I can't understand about you, Suvorov: you don't seem tofind any pleasure in tormenting others. We have great possibilities for gettingpleasure out of our own strength. You can torment a "puppet" to your heart'scontent. But you seem to reject that pleasure. Why?'

'Because it doesn't give me any pleasure.'

That's a pity.'

'Is it bad for our profession?'

'On the whole no. There's an astronomical number of prostitutes in theworld, but only very few of them get any pleasure out of their situation. For themajority of them it's simply a very tough job and nothing else. Irrespective ofwhether she likes the work or not, her standard of Uving depends on herattitude to her work, on her sense of responsibility and on her diligence. Youdon't necessarily have to like your profession, but you have to make an effortand show that you can work hard. What are you grinning about?'

'That's an interesting turn of phrase: "a hardworking prostitute".'

'It's nothing to laugh about. We are no better than prostitutes. We do a notvery clean job for somebody else's satisfaction. We are very well paid for ourhard work. You don't particularly like your profession, but you're hard-working and that's good enough for me. Pour yourself another. You know besthow much you can take.'

'What about you?'

'Only a little, really. Two fingers. Enough. Now, this is why I got you here.You can only survive on this stinking planet if you get other people by thethroat. Our system enables us to do this. You can hang on to power byscrambling upwards, but only in a group. The group pushes one personupwards, and once he has got a bit higher he helps the whole group. There's aBrezhnev group and a Kosygin group, there are groups in all the ministries anddepartments; everyone who is scrambling upwards has a group. Soon you willbe getting your own group together, but remaining a member of my group.'

Suddenly he grabbed me by my collar: 'If you betray me you'll be sorry!'

T shall not betray you.'

'I know.' There was a grim look in his eyes. 'You can betray whomever youwish, but not me. Don't even think about it. I know you're not thinking aboutit. I can tell by the look in your satanical eyes. Drink up and let's be going. It'salready late. Be at your desk by seven o'clock tomorrow morning. Get all yoursecret documents ready to hand over by nine. I have been made Head ofInteUigence of the Carpathian mihtary district. I am going to take with me intothe Intelligence Directorate of the district's HQ the majority of those people Ibrought here with me. Not all of them. But I'm going to pull you up with me.Don't forget.'

I just didn't know what was the matter with me. Something was wrong. Iwould wake up in the night and stare for ages at the ceiling. If they were to sendme somewhere to die for some cause or other I would become a hero. I wouldnot mind giving up my Hfe -1 had no further use for it. I would then lapse into ashort restless sleep. I would feel as though I was being carried somewhere,flying high above the earth. Away from Kravtsov. Away from Spetsnaz. Awayfrom the tough fighting. I was ready to fight, to strangle people. But what wasthe point of it all? Fighting for power is not at all the same as fighting for one'scountry. But would fighting for my country really console me? I had alreadybeen defending my country's interests in Czechoslovakia - not a very pleasantbusiness, to tell you the truth. I flew ever higher in my dreams. Fromunattainable ringing heights I looked down on my unfortunate country, mymother-country. It was really very sick, but I couldn't make out what it wassuffering from. Sheer madness, perhaps, or schizophrenia. And I didn't knowhow I could help. Somebody had to be killed, but I didn't know who. Wherewas I flying to? To God, perhaps? But there was no god. All the same - theLord preserve me.

Chapter Five

Lvov is the most difficult city in the world in which to find your way about. Itwas built like that many centuries ago, so that the enemy should never be ableto find the city centre. And nature has done everything to help the builders:hills, ravines and a river weaving in between them. The back streets of Lvovdouble back in spirals and land the unwelcome visitor at the river's edge, ordown a steep slope, or in a dead-end. I am apparently also an enemy as far as thecity is concerned. I just cannot find its centre. The domes of the cathedral canjust be seen through the chestnuts. So it's close by. Just round a couple ofhouses .... But the side street leads me upwards, the dives down to a bridge,makes two sharp turns, and I can no longer see the cathedral. In fact I havedifficulty in making out in which direction it now lies. So I turn back and startagain from the beginning. But that doesn't work either. The side street takesme into a dense web of winding and uneven but amazingly clean streets, andfinally brings me out onto a noisy main street with strangely small trams thatlook like toys. I can't find my way on my own, and all my training inunderground work is of no assistance. Taxi! Hey - taxi! To the district HQ!The Pentagon? Yes, that's it, to the Pentagon.

The huge blocks that house the headquarters of the Carpathian MilitaryDistrict have only recently been built. The city refers to the glass monstrositiesas the 'Pentagon'.

The Lvov Pentagon is an extremely impressive organisation which over-whelms a new arrival with its wealth of security, its colonels' epaulettes andgeneral's braid.

But in reahty things are not quite so complicated as appears on the first day.The headquarters of the military district is a body which has at its disposalterritory the size of Western Germany with a population of seventeen millions.The district HQ is responsible for the preservation of the Soviet regime in thatterritory and for the mobilisation of the population, the industry and thetransport in the event of war. Apart from that, the district HQ has under itscommand four Armies: an air army, a tank army and two all-arm armies. Onthe eve of war the district HQ becomes the HQ of a Front and will commandthe armies in battle.

The organisational structure of a district HQ is exactly the same as thestructure of an Army HQ, the only difference being that everything

is on ahigher level. The HQ does not consist of departments but of directorates, andthe directorates are in their turn divided into departments, and the depart-

ments into groups. Once you know the structure of an Army HQ it is easyenough to make yourself at home in a district HQ.

All was clear. Everything was reasonable and logical. We young new arrivalswere once again trying to check our knowledge of everything and poke ournoses into every corner: what's that and why do they do that?

The former Chief of Intelligence in the Carpathian military district, Major-general Berestov, had been removed and along with him his whole crew haddeparted: the older ones to take their pensions, the younger ones to Siberia, toNovaya Zemlya, to Turkestan. The new Chief of Intelligence was ColonelKravtsov and we, Kravtsov's people, were strolling unceremoniously aroundthe wide corridors of the Lvov Pentagon. Everything had been carefullyplanned and provided for. Our Second directorate took up a whole floor in aninternal block of the colossal complex of buildings. One disadvantage was thatall our windows looked out on a huge empty concrete courtyard, probably forreasons of security. The lack of a decent view from the windows was about theonly inconvenience, the rest suited us very well. We hked the sensiblearrangement of the building, the vast windows and the spacious offices. Butwhat pleased us most was the departure of our predecessors who had untilrecently controlled all the intelligence work in the district, including our 13thArmy. Now fate had swept all those fellows away into the distant corners of theempire. Power is a very tender, fragile thing. You have to hold tighdy on to it.And carefully.

Our whole crew, myself included, were quick to find our feet in our newsurroundings. Our work was still the same, only on a larger scale. It was moreinteresting there. I was already known to the others and was met with smiles inthe staff. I had already estabhshed good relations with the fellows in theˆInquisition' - the group of translators - and I was already hearing tales told bythe cipher officers at the signals centre and the operators at the radiomonitoring centre. But there were also people who knew me beyond the limitsof the Second directorate. Above all in war planning - that was the Firstdirectorate. But war planning could not exist without our prognoses. Theywere not allowed to enter our directorate and for that reason they invited us totheirs.

'Vitya, what is the enemy in Bitburg planning to do in the next week?'

Bitburg was an American air base in Western Germany, and to answer thequestion I would have to delve into my papers. Ten minutes later I wouldalready be in the First Directorate:

'Activity on the airfield is within normal hmits, with one exception: onWednesday three C-141 transport planes are arriving from the United States.'

When we delivered such prognoses the operators would smile, as much as tosay: That guy's doing a good job!

The operators did not have the right to know where we received our

information from. But operators are only human and they also read spy stories,and therefore they probably thought that Kravtsov had a super-spy in someNATO headquarters. Among themselves they referred to the super-spy as 'thatguy'. Officers in war planning are also very full of praise and satisfaction for 'thatguy'. Kravtsov does in fact have people he has recruited in various places. Everymilitary district recruits foreigners both for obtaining information and forSpetsnaz activities. Only in this particular case 'that guy' had nothing to do withit. Whatever was received from his secret network of agents Kravtsov kept in hissafe and showed to only a very few people. And the information we provided forthe war planners had a far more prosaic provenance. It was actually obtainedfrom what are known as activity charts. This way of obtaining informationamounted to careful monitoring of the enemy's radio and radar stations. Everyradio station and every radar installation was carefully documented: its type, itsfunction, where it was situated, to whom it belonged and on what frequencies itoperated. A great many messages were deciphered by our Fifth department.But there were some radio stations whose messages took years to decipher.Those were the very ones which were our principal concern, because they werethe most important ones. But whether we could understand what they weresaying or not, an activity chart was kept for such stations and every time theywent on the air they were recorded. Every station had its own character, its ownhandwriting. Some stations worked in the daytime, others at night, still othershad days off, while others did not. If every transmission was recorded andstudied it soon became possible even to forecast what it was going to do.

In addition, the activity of the radio stations was compared with the activity ofthe enemy's forces. We obtained priceless information from the men who droveSoviet trucks abroad, from the stewards on Soviet trains, from Aeroflot crews,from our sportsmen, and of course from our network of agents. This sort ofinformation was very scrappy and disconnected: 'Division activated by alarm','Missile battery departed in unknown direction', 'Mass take-off of all aircraft'.Our computer compared these scraps with what was going on in the ether. Anyapparent regularity was noted and special cases and exceptions to the rulestudied. And as a result of many years spent analysing such things it becameperfectly possible to say: 'If RB-7665-I went on the air it means that in four days'time there will take place a mass take-off at Ramstein.' It is an inviolable law.And if a station which we call C-1000 springs suddenly into action even a childwould realise that the battle readiness of the American troops in Europe wasraised to a higher level. And if, for example ....

'Listen, Vitya, we understand very well that you can't talk about it But

you just... what shall I say ... anyway, look after that guy.'

They were checking up on me. All my life they would be checking up on me. Itwas part of the job. They checked up on my self-control, my stamina, my mentalreactions and my loyalty. But I was not alone in this. Everybody was being

screened all the time. Who you smiled at and who you didn't smile at, who youdrank with and who you slept with. And if you didn't drink or sleep withanybody there was a further question: why not?

'Come in.'

'Comrade colonel, senior heutenant '

'Sit down,' he ordered.

He was Colonel Marchuk, Kravtsov's new deputy. Soviet mihtary inteUi-gence doesn't have any special uniform. Everybody wears the uniform of thetroops from which he came into intelhgence. For example, I wore the uniformof the tank troop while Kravtsov wore an artillery officer's uniform. In theIntelligence Directorate we had infantry men and airmen and sappers andchemical warfare men. Colonel Marchuk was a medical officer. On his crimsonlapels he wore the medic's badge: a serpent entwined around a golden cup. It isan

attractive badge. Not as attractive, of course, as ours, but still attractive.Soldiers say the medical badge means: cunning as a serpent and not bad atdrinking.

Marchuk stared at me earnestly, overpoweringly. Was he trying to hypno-tise me? His stare made me feel uncomfortable. But I withstood it. I had had asound training in that. Everyone in Spetsnaz trains on the dogs. If you lookstraight into a dog's eyes you find it cannot withstand a man's stare. A man canstop a howling dog with a look, but only if the dog is alone and not in a pack.Facing a pack you have to use a knife to help your eyes. Look it in the eyes butget the knife into its flanks. Then start looking at another one.

'So, Suvorov, we have been studying you carefully. You work well and wehke you. Your brain seems to work like an electronic machine. An untuned one... but you can be tuned. I'm sure of that. Otherwise we wouldn't keep youhere. You have an exceptional memory. Your capacity for analysing matters issufficiently developed. You have good taste. That's a nice girl you've pickedfrom the control group, a very nice girl. We know her. She has never let anyonenear her before. So there you are. There doesn't really seem to be anythingabout you to comment on.'

I didn't blush. I wasn't a college boy. I was a fighting officer. And I don'thave that kind of skin. My skin is Asian and so is my blood. For that reason Idon't blush. Different physiology. But how the devil did they find out aboutmy girlfriend?

'It's very regrettable, Suvorov, but we are obliged to know such things. Wehave to know everything about you. That's our job. After studying you wehave come to certain conclusions, most of them favourable. What pleases usmost of all is the progress you have made in ridding yourself of your faults. Youhave practically rid yourself of your fear of heights and closed premises. Youare no longer afraid of the sight of blood, and that's exceptionally important inour work. The inevitabihty of death does not scare you. You have goodrelations with the dogs. You'll need some more training in that, of course. Butyou've really got a problem with frogs and snakes, and that's bad. Are youscared of them?'

Tes, Tm scared,' I confessed. *How did you find out?'

That's none of your business. Your business is to learn not to be afraid

ofsnakes. What is there to be afraid of? You can see I've got a Httle serpent sittingon my lapels. And there are some people who actually eat frogs.'

The Chinese?'

*Not only the Chinese. The French do too.'

'In a famine, comrade colonel, I would sooner eat people '

*But it's not because of famine. Frogs are a delicacy. Don't you believe me?'

Of course I didn't believe him. Propaganda. Life wasn't as bad as that inFrance. If he insisted, I would of course agree that the proletariat in Francedidn't Hve very well. But only out loud. To myself I would remain of the sameopinion. Life was good in France, and the proletariat didn't eat frogs. Butthere was no deceiving Marchuk. He had no difficulty in detecting the doubt inmy eyes.

'Come in here.' He summoned me into the cinema where they put on secretfilms about the enemy. Marchuk pressed a button and we could see on thescreen a kitchen, a chef, frogs, saucepans, a red dining room, waiters, andcustomers in a restaurant. The customers didn't look like conjurers, but theyate frogs' legs.

'Well, what about it?'

What could I say? There seemed to be no way out. Yet they had recentlyshown a film called Liberation with Hitler in it. It wasn't really Hitler, but anactor from Eastern Germany. Dietz was his name. Now if the colonel himselfwere to eat a frog I would beheve him, but you can put on anything in a film,even Hitler, let along frogs.

'What about it?' he repeated. What could I say? If I said I accepted it hewould inmiediately get at me, asking how an intelligence officer could fall forsuch rubbish. I show you some nonsense and you take it all in? How on earthcan you, an officer responsible for gathering information, distinguish reallyvaluable documents from material slipped to us by the enemy to confuse us?

'No,' I said. 'I can't believe what I saw in that film. It's a fake. A pretty poorone. If people have nothing to eat they can at the worst eat cats or dogs. Whyshould they eat frogs?'

It was quite clear to me that it was an instructional film. They were

testingmy reactions. The woman had a rather fluffy poodle with her. Now they wouldcheck to see whether I noticed the poodle or not. Of course I saw it. And I hadcome to the conclusion I was obviously expected to draw: no normal personwas going to eat frogs if there was a poodle going begging. It wouldn't belogical. But Marchuk was getting cross.

'Frogs cost money, and quite a lot.'

I remained silent. I wasn't going to get involved in polemics. Everybodyknew that frogs couldn't be expensive. But I accepted what the colonel saiddiplomatically, a Httle uncertainly, leaving myself a loophole to retreatthrough: 'They are getting too fussy. Bourgeois decadence.'

'There you are. At last you believe. I showed you that film for this reason:

people eat them, yet you are scared even to take them in your hands. To tell youthe truth I myself cannot pick up a frog or a snake in my hands, but then I don'thave to. But you do, Viktor, as a young officer with good prospects inintelligence.

My innards simply froze: surely they weren't going to make me eat them.Marchuk was a psychologist. He could read my thoughts like a book. Neverfear - we're not going to make you eat frogs. Snakes perhaps, but not frogs.

He was just a private, very short and with a child's face and long eyelashes, likea girl's. But he was in Spetsnaz. Four battahons of the Spetsnaz brigade weremade up of really huge soldiers who strode around the town like a herd ofbears. But one company in the brigade consisted of soldiers of various sizes,some of them very small indeed. This was a special professional company, andit was more dangerous than all the other four battahons put together.

The soldier had a very thin neck. His name - Kipa - was not Russian. But hewas certainly in the special company for some good reason. It meant he was anexpert in some special way of killing people. I once watched him beat off anattack by four men dressed in protective armour and armed with long staves.He defended himself against the staves with an ordinary sapper's spade. He didit without passion but with skill. Such fighting always attracts attention.However much of a hurry he might be in, if a man in Spetsnaz sees a fight goingon in the

main square he will inevitably stop to have a look. And what a finefight it had been! Now the little soldier was in front of me. He was going toteach me something. He took out of a bucket a Uttle green frog and explainedthat it was best to get used to it by playing with it. You could do amazing thingswith a frog. You could, for example, put a straw into it and blow it up. It wouldthen float on the surface but would not be able to dive, and that was very funny.You could 'undress' the frog - do a sort of strip-tease. The soldier took a smallknife and showed me how it was done. He made little slits in the comers of themouth and in one movement removed its skin. The skin appeared to come offas easily as a glove from your hand. Kipa then put the skinned frog down on thefloor. You could see all its muscles, bones and bloodvessels. The frog jumpedabout the floor croaking, and it seemed as though it felt no pain. The soldierreached into the bucket, took out another frog, skinned it like skinning abanana and put it down on the floor. Now there were two of them to jumpabout, so they shouldn't be lonely.

'Comrade senior Ueutenant, Colonel Marchuk ordered me to show you thewhole of my set-up here and to get you used to dealing with these httle beasts.'

'Are you just as good at handling snakes?'

'I handle them too. I keep the frogs only to feed the snakes with.'

'Will you give these to the snakes?'

'The undressed ones? Sure. No sense in letting good stuff go to waste.'

He took the two naked frogs and led me to where the snakes were kept. It

was very humid and airless. He opened the cover and dropped the two frogsinto a large glass box where a repulsive grey reptile lay curled up in a corner.

*What sort of snakes do you keep?'

* Adders and rattlesnakes. We've asked intelligence in the Turkestan districtto send us a cobra, but it hasn't arrived yet. Not a big thing, but very expensiveto transport. It has to be kept warm and given food and drink on the way. It's avery delicate thing, and if you upset its regime it will certainly die on you.'

*Who taught you this trade?'

*I am self-taught. Just an amateur. Been at it since I was a kid.'

*Are you fond of them?'

'Yes, I am.' He said it without emotion or any intention to create an effect. I

realised the scoundrel was not lying Jesus Christ! I had never thought of a

man loving snakes.

At that moment the two naked frogs let out piercing screeches. The fat lazyreptile had at last deigned to pay them some attention.

*Sit down, comrade senior lieutenant.' I glanced first at the chair, to makesure there wasn't a cold slippery reptile curled up on it. Then I sat down .... Iwas scared stiff. Kipa smiled: * After ten lessons you will be asking to comehere yourself.'

His prophecy did not come true. I still found snakes just as repulsive.Nevertheless I could hold one in my hand. I knew how to grab hold of one. Iknew how to clean it out and grill it on a long stick or a piece of wire. And if Iwere ever to be faced with the choice - to eat human flesh or snake, I would eatthe snake first.

The helicopter had dropped us on a marshy island. It would soon pick upKravtsov and take him off, leaving me alone at the control post.

*If a group opens up communications without having first set up anobservation post and proper defences, give it an extra hour's punishment.'

'Very good.'

Tor any violation of the regulations in the preparation of coded messages,exclude the whole group from the competition altogether.'

'Very good.'

*Make sure they drink water properly. It mustn't be gulped down. You haveto take a little into the mouth and keep it there for a few seconds to moisten thetongue and throat. A person who gulps water down will never slake his thirst,will start sweating, will never have enough water, and will soon be out ofaction. If you see anyone drinking water

in the wrong way you can given him anextra five minutes, or even ten minutes, of punishment.'

'I understand very well, comrade colonel. This isn't my first time as anumpire. You'd better get a bit of sleep. The helicopter will be back in an hour.Just right for you. How long is it since you had a sleep . . .'

'Never mind about that, Viktor. It's all in a day's work. It's worse when the

Party leaders start bothering you. We're lucky. In Lvov we have good relationsbetween the Party leaders and the district command. But in Rostov theCommander of the North Caucasus military district. Lieutenant-general ofTanks Litovtsev doesn't have it so good. The local Party bosses have ganged upwith the KGB against him and don't give him a moment's peace. They havebeen sending complaints to the Central Conmiittee. They've already writtenmore complaints and denunciations than Dumas wrote novels.'

*And nobody can do anything to help General Litovtsev?'

'What shall I say .... He's got a lot of friends. But what can one do to help?We are not masters of the situation. We stick to the regulations, our manual

and military law, we don't break them But how can one help him and stay

within the law?'

'Comrade colonel, maybe I can help in some way?'

'How could you, Viktor, a senior Ueutenant, help a lieutenant-general?'

T've got a long night ahead of me, I'll do some thinking '

'Actually there's no need to do a lot of thinking .... Everything has been

thought through. It's action we need I can hear the helicopter. That's for

me, no doubt. Look here, Viktor, there's a personal friend of mine, the Headof Intelligence from the North Caucasus mihtary district. Major-

generalZabaluyev - one of Litovtsev's colleagues - attending these exercises. Hewants personally to watch the competition of the Spetsnaz forces, but hedoesn't want to embarrass the troops with his rank. Tomorrow he will take upposition with you at this control post. He will be wearing our usual uniform: agrey overcoat without any distinguishing badges. He won't interfere in thework of the groups. He just wants to observe what goes on and to have a chatwith you. If you really want to help, why don't you ask him?'

I thought for a moment. 'Do you feel, comrade colonel, that when theexercises are over I might have to go sick?'

'I have given you no such order. If you feel it necessary, then of course. Butjust remember that it's not so easy to go sick in our Army. You have to get a chitfrom a doctor.'

'I'll get one all right.'

'Only watch out - there are times when a man feels ill but when the doctordoesn't share his feelings. That's very awkward. You have to go sick in such away that the doctor has no doubt about it. You've really got to have a hightemperature. You know what can happen: you feel ill yourself, but you've notemperature.'

'I'll have a temperature.'

'All right, Viktor. I wish you well. Have you got something to give GeneralZabeluyev to eat?'

'Yes, I have.'

'Only don't hit the vodka ... unless he asks for it.'

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Nine days later I reported to Colonel Kravtsov's office and informed him that Ihad gone sick following the exercise but that I was now feeling fine. He smiledat me and took me down a httle. A well-trained intelligence officer never wentsick, he said. You had to keep control of yourself. You had to drive the illnessout of your body. Our bodies were subject to our will, and by sheer willpoweryou could drive any illness out of yourself, even cancer. Strong people didn'tget ill. Only the faint-hearted went sick.

He was giving me a good talking-to, but was himself quite radiant. He justcouldn't suppress a smile. He smiled happily and openly. It was the

waysoldiers smile after a bayonet fight: just don't touch our people! Touch themand we'll have your guts out!

A Spetsnaz soldier has many enemies. An early dawn and a late sunset areagainst you. The buzz of a mosquito and the roar of a helicopter are alsoenemies. It's bad for you, my boy, when the sun's in your eyes. It's bad for youwhen you find yourself in a searchlight beam. It's bad when your heart isgalloping. It's bad when thousands of electronic installations are scouring theether, trying to catch the sound of your hoarse whisper and your burstinglungs. It's always bad for you, brother. Really bad is when your principalenemy appears. They will think up many more different devices to catch you,anti-personnel mines and electronic sensors of every kind. They will set youagainst other soldiers, highly trained men. But your principal enemy alwaysremains the same. Your principal enemy, my friend, has its ears standing up,yellow fangs with drops of evil saliva, a grey fur and a long tail. Its eyes arebrown with yellow spots and its coat is red-brown beneath the collar. It is yourprincipal enemy because it is quicker than you. It detects your scent with itsnose. And it has a tremendous leap when it hurls itself at your throat.

That's it, the enemy. The most important. The most important of all. Seehow it bares its fangs. Its hackles up, its tail too, and its ears flat just before itleaps. Now the brute jumps. It doesn't growl; it just wheezes. Sticky salivaround its jaws, as though mad. The KGB provides a special entry in its records,headed 'Viciousness'. And the experts write terrible words under the heading:'good viciousness,' 'excellent viciousness'.

This particular dog probably had only exclamation marks under theviciousness heading. It was called Mars and was the property of the KGBfrontier troops. I wouldn't say it was a huge dog. I have seen even bigger ones.But Mars was very experienced. And everybody knew it.

On this occasion I had not been put against Mars. Today it was ZhenyaBychenko's job. We shouted words of encouragement to him: hang on,Zhenya, give it to him, show him how they taught you to fight in Spetsnaz. Itwas not allowed and not the custom to shout advice on such occasions. Eventhe most excellent advice might at the last moment distract the fighter'sattention and allow the fierce animal to get his teeth into his throat.

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Zhenya was holding a knife in his left hand and a tunic in his right.

But hehadn't wrapped his hand in the tunic. He was simply holding it out with hishand stretched forward. The dog didn't like that: it wasn't what he was usedto. Nor did he like the knife in the left hand. Why in the left hand? The dog wasin no hurry. He shifted his animal eyes from the knife to the throat and fromthe throat to the knife. But he also eyed the tunic. Why had the man notwrapped it round his hand? With his canine reasoning the grey animal knewthat the man had only one key hand and that the other one was only supportingand diverting. And the dog must not make a mistake. He must attack the handwhich was the decisive one, the most dangerous. But maybe he should go forthe throat? The dog shifted his eyes, trying to choose. Once he had made hisdecision his eyes would hold still and he would attack. The man in the arenaand we who were watching were waiting for that very moment. Before it leaptthe man would have a split second to strike a counter-blow. But Mars wasexperienced. He attacked suddenly without a snarl or a growl. He did notattack as other dogs do, he pounced without concentrating his eyes andwithout straining back before the leap. His long body was suddenly suspendedin the air. His mouth and his wild eyes flew at Zhenya without a noise of anykind. Nobody actually caught the moment when he sprang. We expected thejump a second later. And so in that silence the dog flew at Zhenya's throat. ButZhenya's tunic whipped across the dog's eyes. We caught sight only of the soleof his black boot. The dog howled as it landed in the corner. We roared withdelight. We howled Uke wild boars. We screamed with pleasure.

*Cut him up, Zhenya! Cut the grey one! Give him the knife! Zhenya! Theknife! Finish him off before he gets up!'

But Zhenya did not attack the snarling animal. He did not try to kill thepanting dog. He hopped over the barrier straight into the arms of the delightedcompany of Spetsnaz spectators.

*0h, Zhenya! The way you got him with your boot! You got him breathingout, and in mid-air! What a man!'

Meanwhile in the arena a Uttle soldier with bright green epaulettes wasweeping beside the panting dog, and for some reason stuffing a lump of sugarcovered with saliva into the dog's bloody mouth.

ˆComrade senior Heutenant, you are wanted by the head of the admin, section.'

*I am on my way.'

Of all the departments at HQ the administration department is the smallest.At the headquarters of military districts departments are usually commandedby colonels and directorates by major-generals, and it is only in the admin,department that the chief is a major. But when an officer is summoned to thedepartment he pulls himself quickly together. What on earth have they got forme? The administration department is in a small room occupied by an elderlygrey-haired major, a real paper-pusher, with three lance-corporal clerks. But

everybody is scared to be called to the admin, department, regardless ofwhether he is a lieutenant or a major-general. The admin, department is theplace where the wishes of the district commander are turned into a written

order. And what is written in black and white The admin, department is

the channel by which the Supreme Commander, the Minister of Defence andthe Chief of the General Staff convey their orders to their subordinates. Theadmin, department transmits those orders to the people to whom they areaddressed.

ˆComrade major, Senior Lieutenant Suvorov reporting on your instructions.'

Tut your identity card on the table.'

I took a deep breath and placed the httle green booklet with its golden star onthe table in front of the major. He calmly took the ˆCertificate of Officer'sIdentity', studied it attentively and for some reason spent some time over page11, on which my personal weapon was recorded, and page 14 where my bloodgroup was noted. Not a muscle on his flabby face moved. He did his job justlike a machine, as impassively as a hangman. The major then handed thebooklet to the lance-corporal, who had everything ready on his desk. Hedipped his long gold pen into a pot of black ink and wrote something carefullyinto the book. I remained standing at attention but with my shoulder droppedso that I could glimpse the lance-corporal. Patience. In a minute the majorwould announce some decision. The corporal dried what he had written andhanded the book back to the major. The major glanced at me enquiringly, tooka very complicated-looking key from a Httle secret pocket, opened the hugedoor of the safe, took out a big seal,

slowly took aim and then suddenly andsharply brought it down on the page of my booklet just written on.

* Listen to the order!'

I drew myself up.

*Order concerning the personnel of the Carpathian military districtNo. 0257. Secret. Clause 17. Senior Lieutenant Suvorov, V.A., officer of the2nd Directorate of the District HQ to be promoted prematurely to the militaryrank of captain in accordance with representations made by the chief of the 2ndDirectorate Colonel Kravtsov and the Chief of Staff of the District Lieu tenant-General Volodin. Signed: Lieutenant-General of Tank Troops Obaturov.'

*I serve the Soviet Union!'

1 congratulate you, captain.'

Thank you, comrade major. Please accept an invitation to the wake.'

Thank you, Viktor, for the invitation. But I can't accept it. If I acceptedevery such proposal I should have drunk myself to death long ago. Don't beoffended. Today alone there are 116 men on the list, eighteen of thempremature. So don't take offence, Viktor.'

The major handed me back my identity book.

*Once again, thank you, comrade major.'

I flew back down the stairs and along the corridors as if on wings.

*How come you're so cheerful?'

'How come you were summoned to the badger in his lair?'

I answered no one. I mustn't satisfy their curiosity - it would bring bad luck.The first to know about my promotion had to be my commanding officer andno one else.

'Why are you looking so pleased, Viktor? Been promoted?'

*No, no. I've eighteen months to wait yet for captain.'

I wanted to get back to the department as soon as possible. The

blessed metaldoors and permits held me up.

'Comrade colonel, may I come in?'

'Come in.' But Kravtsov did not look up from the map.

'Comrade colonel, Senior Lieutenant Suvorov. I am reporting to you onbeing promoted ahead of time to the rank of captain.'

Kravtsov looked me over, but for some reason he kept looking down.

'Congratulations, captain.'

'I serve the Soviet Union!'

'In the Soviet Army a captain has more stars on his shoulder than anybody:four of them. You Viktor have the maximum. Consequently I do not wish youmany stars; I wish you only a few stars, but big ones. You have a great futureahead of you.'

'Thank you, comrade colonel. Permit me to invite you to the wake.'

'When?'

'Today - when else?'

'What do you say to our postponing it until tomorrow? Tonight we've gotto go and prepare an exercise. If the lads drink too much this evening we'llnever get them together. Let's get the job done and then celebratetomorrow.'

'Fine.'

'Today you're free. But remember: we set off at three in the morning.'

'I shan't forget.'

'Then off you go.'

'Very good.'

Exercises are usually carried out year after year on the same training groundsand firing ranges, and the staff officers are well acquainted with the area wherethe training battles take place. All the same, before largescale exercises takeplace the officers who are to act as intermediaries and umpires have to visit thearea again to make sure that everything is ready for the event: the whole areacordoned off,

models representing the enemy in place, dangerous zonesindicated by special signs. Every umpire in his section has to have a good ideaof the forthcoming battle and must prepare for the forces he is observing andtraining the sort of questions, suggestions and situations appropriate for justthat area and not somewhere else.

Because the umpires knew the territory where the exercises were to takeplace pretty well (many of them had served there as lieutenants and hadthemselves been tested there at some time), the trip to the exercise area before

the exercises became a sort of little picnic, a little group excursion, a chance tounwind in the course of the helter-skelter of staff work.

*Has everyone got it clear?'

'All clear,' roared the staff officers as one man.

Then it's time to have some supper. Let's go to table. Today ViktorSurvorov is host.'

There is actually no table, just a dozen grey soldiers' blankets spread out on aclear spot in a fir wood near a stream. All we had was on the table: tins of preservedfish and meat, slices of pink bacon fat, onions, cucumbers, radishes. The armydrivers had baked some potatoes over the camp-fire and boiled up some soup.

I offered Colonel Kravtsov the seat of honour. Such is the tradition. Herefused and offered me the place instead. Also a tradition. I had to refuse.Twice. But the third time I had to accept the invitation and invite Kravtsov totake the seat on my right. The rest took their seats according to seniority:Kravtsov's deputies, heads of departments, their deputies, then the seniormen from the groups, then all the others.

It was the duty of the youngest of those present to set out the bottles on thetable. He was Tolya Buturlin, a lieutenant from the 'Inquisition', from thetranslators, that is. A good lad, who took his duties seriously. Traditionforbade him to smile or to say anything. The others also kept straight faces. Itwas not done to smile or to talk. Nor was it permitted to ask why there was asenior lieutenant sitting at the head of the table. It was obvious to everybodywhy the chilled bottles were being put out, but it was not considered proper tospeak of them or about the reason for their being there. You were expected tosit still and keep a respectful silence.

Tolya brought the bottles from the stream. They had been stored there in acarefully arranged pile in icy water. The water swirled around the clear glass,bubbling and frothing.

'Where's your glass?' The enquiry was traditional.

'Here.' I handed Kravtsov a large cut glass tumbler. Kravtsov filled it rightup to the very rim with the transparent Hquid and placed it before me, verycarefully. Not a single drop should be lost.

But the glass had to be full. The fuller the better. Everybody kept silent, asthough they were not concerned with what was going on. Then Kravtsov tookout of his officer's case a small silver star and dropped it carefully into my glass.There was a faint tinkle as the star bobbed around in the glass and glittered.

I took my glass, being careful not to spill anything, and put it to my lips. Youare not supposed to reach out with your lips to meet the glass, although natureprompts you to sip off just a drop, so as not to spill any. Higher and higher Iraised my glass. The sunlight shone through the liquid and threw outmulti-coloured rays. Then I had to move the glass away from the sun and lowerit to my lips. Then my Hps touched it. It was very cold. I began to drink thefiery Hquid, raising the bottom of the glass even higher. The little star at thebottom shifted and slid slowly towards my Ups, until it touched them. Thus itis as if an officer were welcoming his new star with a kiss. I held the star lightly

in my lips until all the fiery liquid had run down my throat. And that was it. Itook the star carefully with my left hand and looked around me: I had to breakmy glass. With this in mind someone had thoughtfully placed a large stone onthe soft grass. I hurled the glass against the stone and the ringing splintersscattered around. Then I handed Kravtsov my wet star. With his Uttle officers'ruler he measured out the right place on my right epaulet. The fourth star hadto be exactly on the red stripe and its centre 25 millimetres above the previousone. So it was put in its place. Now it was my chance to take a Uttle food andcounter the effect of the vodka with salted cucumbers.

'Where is your glass?' I was asked again.

Two shoulders. Two epaulettes. Consequently, two stars, which meant twoglasses ... at the start of the ceremony.

I proffered a second glass. Once again the fiery-icy Hquid swirled around init. Again to the very brim.

I stood up. It's easier to drink standing up, and it is permitted. Nobodywould object. I could have drunk the first glass standing. Tradition does notprevent it. So long as the glasses are full. So long as the officer does not spill ofthe precious sparkling drops.

A second star ghttered in the stream of vodka. Down went the vodka, andcrash went the glass, and the star appeared on my other epaulette. Then Kravt-sov poured himself a drink, right to the brim. And everyone else quiedy pouredhimself what he felt like. If you admired Viktor you would pour a full glass. Ifnot, you poured as much as you wanted. But you had to drink it all at one gulp.

*Let us drink,' the colonel proposed quietly.

It was not done at that point to say what we were drinking to. We drank andthat was that. They drank slowly and solemnly, but always in a single gulp. Ialone did not drink. It was then my right to look at each one to see how mucheach had poured himself: who had a full glass and whose glass was only two-thirds full. But they were all full; and then they were all empty.

According to tradition I was still a senior lieutenant, although the order hadbeen posted the previous day and although I already had the new stars on myepaulettes. Kravtsov drank up, and took a sip of water. That was followed bythe words of the ritual: There is a new force in our regiment!'

It was from that moment that I was considered to have been promoted. Onlythen was I a captain. Then at last I could smile.

Then there was shouting and much noise, everybody smiling. There weregood wishes and congratulations. Everybody was talking and laughing. Theceremony was over: no more tradition. The officers' drinking bout was begin-ning. And if there is truth in wine, then that day it would be wholly on our side.Tolya rushed off to the stream. Young Tolya would have his day and a chance tocelebrate. One day.

Bhstering heat. Dust. Sand between your teeth. And the flat, dreary steppewhichever way you looked. The sun, bright, cruel and impersonal, shining

mercilessly into your eyes like an interrogator's arc-lamp. Only very occa-sionally did an ugly piece of tree, bent low by the blizzards of the steppe, breakup the appalling monotony of the landscape.

Anybody in his senses would spit, cross himself and go back home. Therewas nothing to do there. But we unfortunates carried on to where the aridsteppe came suddenly to an end at the steep banks of the muddy river Ingul,where the stark outlines of watch-towers stood out in the shimmering heat anddozens of rows of barbed wire formed a barrier round the stunted bushes. Thetrees were practically bare, their scanty leaves grey from a thick layer of dust.But were those really watch-towers? Perhaps they were for geological work? Orfor oil prospecting? No, they had nothing to do with oil: those towers wereequipped with searchlights and machine-guns. There were a lot of watch-towers, a lot of searchlights and a lot of machine-guns. So we had not gonewrong. We were on the right road. You're doing fine, comrades! This way forus. Zheltyye Vody. The time would come when that name would have thesame terrible significance as Katyn, Oswiecim, Sukhanovo, Babi Yar,Buchenwald or Kyshtym. But that time had not yet come, so that most peoplehearing that name did not shudder. And it wasn't only the man in the street forwhom it had no special associations. It meant just as httle to the prisoners whowere being marched in an endless column from the station towards thewatch-towers. Many of them were really pleased. It wasn't Kolyma or NovayaZemlya: it was the Ukraine, for goodness' sake, which meant they'd survive. Itwould be some time before they learnt - and maybe they would never learn -that the Party bosses in Moscow had a direct line to the manager of the *clayplant' where they were going to work. They were not to know that the top brassat the centre phoned the plant manager every day to get the production figures.Because it was a very important plant, more important than the Chelyabinsktank factory. And the prisoners who were sent there were not in fact as lucky asthey thought. They had no reason to rejoice at the plentiful rations they wouldreceive. The ones whose teeth or hair began to fall out would be transferredelsewhere. The ones who guessed what sort of *clay' they were handling wouldalso be quickly moved on. And if, one day, all the camp inmates rose in revolt,the guard at Zheltyye Vody was thoroughly reliable; if need be, we would cometo its aid. Because right next to the plant was the biggest Spetsnaz trainingcamp. Our lads were not to be fooled with. Better carry on without complain-ing in the *clay plant'.

Dust and heat and the endless steppe. We are making a lot of parachute jumps.From great heights, from low levels and from very low levels. We jumped intwos from an Antonov-12 and in fours from

an Antonov-22. Can you imaginewhat it means to jump in fours? Four men leaving the aircraft within two and ahalf seconds? Of course not. Only someone who has done it can know what it'slike. We jumped in the daytime and we jumped at night. Zheltyye Vody isactually in Europe, not far from Kirovograd. But sunmier there is always hot

and dry, sultry and cloudless. The weather is always good for flying, and that iswhy the Spetsnaz companies, battalions, regiments and brigades were assem-bled there from all corners of the Soviet Union for parachute training fromJune to September. We simply longed for a storm of rain to soften up theaccursed flying field. It was as hard as granite, though it was only clay. Therewas no point in laying cement because the sun had baked a better surface thanany engineer could have done. So we longed for rain: we prayed for it; all of us,tens of thousands of us.

A thunderstorm was advancing like the world revolution - slowly anduncertainly. The steppe was completely dried out, and the wind was raisingsand-storms. The horizon was lost in darkness, the sky shone bright in thedistance. Thunder could be heard rumbling faintly far away. But still no rain. Ilonged to expose my face to big drops of summer rain. But it wouldn't come.Tomorrow there would still be nothing but the debihtating heat, the hot windfull of fine sand, and the endless, burnt-up steppe. And with our dried-outthroats we would be shouting, 'Hurrah!' As we were today. The cream of theSpetsnaz was drawn up from one end to the other of the runway. The sea ofdusty, faded blue berets swayed slightly.

'Attention! Eyes right! Pre - sent arms!'

The band struck up the ceremonial march, and I no longer bothered aboutwater or rain. The sound of the march lifted me out of myself. In the distanceappeared a car bearing a more than Ufe-size Marshal of the Soviet Union. Asthey caught sight of him the first battalion roared, 'Hurrah!' and the soldiers'welcome ran along the ranks - 'A - a - a - ah!' It was probably with a similarcry that the battalions were sent into battle. Hurrah - a - ah.

'Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union, I hereby present the combined unitso{Spetsnaz for review and march-past. Head of the 5th directorate - Colonel-General Petrushevsky.'

The marshal looked at the endless ranks oi Spetsnaz and smiled.

Then General Petrushevsky presented his units:

'The 27th brigade of Spetsnaz of the Belorussian military district!'

'Greetings!' came the roar from the marshal's throat.

'Greetings ... marshal!' the 27th brigade roared in reply.

'The 3rd naval brigade of Spetsnaz of the Black Sea Fleet!'

'Greetings!'

'We serve the Soviet Union!' shouted the 3rd in reply.

'The second independent training battalion of Spetsnazl ... The 13thbrigade of Spetsnaz of the Moscow mihtary district! ... The 224th indepen-dent company of Spetsnaz of the 4th Guards Tank Army!'

The marshal shouted his greetings and his words echoed across the paradeground into the distance.

A military parade is a very strict and serious ceremony. But it is a happy one

too. And there is good purpose to these reviews of the troops. GeneralPetrushevsky's car went to the right of and a Httle to the rear of the marshal'scar. And one could see the general's eyes glowing with pride. He was proud ofhis dashing troops and wanted the marshal to admire them.

The 32nd brigade of Spetsnaz of the Carpathian military district!' ...

'Greetings!'

There seemed to be no end to the aerodrome. The Spetsnaz formed anendless wall.

It had become traditional after every major exercise to parade the troops for ageneral inspection. The tradition went back hundreds of years. So it was inmuch earlier days that the warrior chief would gather together those who hadsurvived, count the casualties and congratulate the victors. With the exercises,which had been on a tremendous scale, now over, it was possible to get someidea on this seemingly endless parade ground of the incredible power of the5th Directorate of the GRU. Even so, not everybody was present.

703rd independent Spetsnaz company of the 17th Army!'

As the marshal drove past the rows of men a thought must have passedthrough his mind. Against whom was this great host to be unleashed? AgainstEurope? Against Asia? Or perhaps against the comrades in the PoUtburo?

Come on, marshal - what are you waiting for? All of us here are with you.We're all fighting to go. Come on, let us off the leash. We'll make the whole ofRussia run with blood. Just give us the order. We won't kill them all, of course,not all of them. Anyone with a big country house and a big car we'll leave alone.There's no harm in having big cars and houses. And those who talk about socialjustice we'll also leave alone. That's a fault, but not a very big one. People goastray, and what can you take from them, from the crazy ones? We shall kill,marshal, only the men who link these two things together into one: the menwho talk a lot about social justice and go around in big cars. They are the onesfor the lamp posts and the telegraph posts. They are the cause of all ourcountry's misfortunes. So let us off the leash, marshal! Of course you can't doit, though, can you? Hurrah - a - ah!

The roar of voices rolls across the field, and it echoes in the dried upwaterways in the distance.

'Are we going to work, men?' asks the marshal.

'A - a - ah,' roared the troops, full of enthusiasm in reply. We'll do our job,don't worry.

We worked all right. We worked day and night. We scarcely could distinguishbetween day and night. Just one thing after another. Parachute jumps in thedaytime and parachute jumps at night. Jumps from very low levels and frommedium heights. Jumps with the aid of catapults. Thank goodness this is notfor everyone. Jumps from the stratosphere. Luckily, too, only for the chosenfew. Competition after competition. Then more jumps. Bitter-tasting dust on

your lips. Bloodshot eyes. Our feelings wanted to find release. Sometimes wewere in a state of complete apathy. We were already packing our parachuteswithout much concern. We just wanted to get them packed and then to grabhalf an hour's sleep. Perhaps we should check them again? To hell with it....Training battles. Napalm. Dogs. MVD. KGB. More shooting and morejumping.

And death walked alongside us all the time. It didn't take anyone under itsblack wings. But it was there, watching us. In the 112th independent battalionthey were testing a new parachute, the D-I-8. It was a bad parachute, and theSpetsnaz were scared of it. They didn't want to jump with it: there wassomething wrong with it. At least once in every hundred jumps the lines fouledthe fabric. The designer of the parachute and the examiners were there too.They told us we hadn't packed them properly and hadn't stored themcarefully. To hell with them: it was we who ran the risks. A sergeant-major inthe 112th battalion jumped with one of these, the lines got caught up in thecanopy and he cut them free with a knife. He landed safely and gently. Butonce he was down they told him in fun that he shouldn't have been in such ahurry to cut the lines, that he should have found where they were sewn with asilk thread and have carefully undone the thread. After a jump like that thesergeant was in no mood for jokes. He gave them all a good lashing with histongue, the designer too.

Death was very close to us. Just on the other side of the fence. Zheltyye Vodywas close by. A concentration camp. Uranium, 'cold clay'. Which meantdeath. Was it not there that every commander got hold of his 'puppets' and'gladiators'? Forbidden zones. Guard towers. Parachute towers. All close by.We and the concentration camp. But why? To frighten us? Or maybe there wassome other reason for having the main Spetsnaz training centre next touranium mines. Next to the concentration camps. Next to death.

More jumping. 'Captain Suvorov. I folded this parachute myself.' The firstoperation. The top of the canopy had been strengthened. 'I folded thisparachute myself.' Ready? Jump. On and on it went. 'Major-General Kravt-sov. I folded this parachute myself.' For a long time I looked blankly at thesignature of my neighbour, who had completed his packing. There wassomething about it I couldn't understand. Something wasn't right. But mybrain wasn't working. Lack of sleep. I made a painful effort to concentrate mymind and suddenly I reahsed:

'Comrade general!'

'Sshh, not so loud. Yes, Viktor. Yes.' And he laughed. 'Only don't let on.I've been a general for the last thirty-two hours. You were the first to reahse it.'

'Congratulations.'

'Thanks. But don't make a fuss about it. We'll have a drink later. This

is notthe time. Oh, damn, I'm tired out. Have you packed your parachute?'

Tes, both of them, comrade general.'

'Give them back.'

'Very well.' And, sensing something contrary to the regulations, I putanother question:

*Am I not jumping today?'

'You're never going to be jumping again.'

'I see' - although I understood nothing.

'You are to report to Kiev. And from there you will probably be sent toMoscow.'

'Very well.'

'Don't tell anyone about your movements. When they make out yourdocuments in the admin, department you will say that you have been orderedto report to the Tenth Chief Directorate of the General Staff.'

'Very well,' I almost shouted.

'Then goodbye, captain. I wish you well.'

'Captain, there is a provisional decision of the General Staff that you are to bedropped in the enemy's rear to carry out a special task.' The unfamiliar generalmeasured me up with a serious gaze. 'How long do you need to prepareyourself?'

'Three minutes, comrade general.'

'Why not five?' For the first time he smiled.

'I only have to pop into the toilet - three minutes will do.' And, realising thathe might not appreciate my joke, I added: 'I have been travelling in a bus allnight and had no opportunity.'

'Nikolai Gerasimovich,' the general said to someone, 'escort the captain tothe toilet.'

Two and a half minutes later I was again standing in front of the general.

'Are you ready now?'

'Yes, comrade general.'

'To go anywhere?'

'Through fire and water, comrade general.'

'And you are not interested in where you are going?'

'I am interested, comrade general.'

'Supposing we decided to take a long time preparing you for carrying out atask? Five years, for example. What would you think about that?'

'I would welcome it.'

'Why?'

'Because it would mean that the task was a really serious one. And that suitsme.'

'What do you know, captain, about the Tenth Chief Directorate of theGeneral Staff?'

'It deals with the provision of weapons for all those who are fighting for

freedom, trains commanders for national liberation movements, and sendsmilitary advisers to Asia, Africa, Cuba ....'

'What would you feel about becoming an officer in the Tenth ChiefDirectorate?'

'It would be the highest honour for me.'

The Tenth Chief Directorate sends advisers to countries with a hot humidclimate and with a hot dry climate. Which would you prefer?'

The hot and humid climate.'

*Why?'

'Because that would mean Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos. There's fightinggoing on there. The fighting has come to an end in the hot and drycountries.'

'You are mistaken, captain. There is always fighting everywhere. There'snever any peace anywhere and never will be. There's war going on all thetime. Open warfare stops sometimes, but never the secret warfare. We areconsidering the question of sending you to the war. To the secret war.'

'To the KGB?'

'No.'

'Can there really be secret warfare without the participation of the KGB?'

'There can.'

'And it is directed by the Tenth Chief Directorate?'

'No - it is directed by the Second Chief Directorate of the General Staff.To conceal its existence the GRU makes use of various organisations includ-ing the Tenth Chief Directorate. We shall send you, captain, for examin-ations at the GRU's secret academy, but everything will be so organised as togive the impression that you are to become a mihtary adviser. The TenthChief Directorate will be your cover. All your documents will be made outonly in the Tenth Chief Directorate. It is they who will summon you toMoscow, where we will take you over to do your examinations.'

'What if I don't pass the examinations?'

He gave a snort of disgust. 'Then we really would hand you over to theTenth Chief Directorate and you really would become a military adviser.They would take you on - you would suit them well. But you suit us too, andwe are sure you'll pass our examinations, otherwise we wouldn't be talking toyou here.'

'I understand, comrade general.'

'In that case it is necessary for you to complete certain formalities.'

He extracted from the safe a sheet of paper, crisp as a new banknote,clearly marked 'Top Secret'.

'Read it and sign it.'

There were twelve short points on the sheet of paper. Each began with thephrase 'It is forbidden' and ended with the ominous warning 'is punishableby death'. The final point read: 'Any attempt to reveal the contents of thisdocument or any part of it is punishable by death.'

'Are you finished?'

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Instead of replying I nodded my head. He moved a pen towards me.signed, and the sheet of paper disappeared into the depths of the safe.Till we meet in Moscow, captain.'

After handing my papers to a quite young senior lieutenant I presented myselfto the officer who was now my former commander:

*Comrade general, this is Captain Suvorov reporting on being transferred tothe Tenth Chief Directorate of the General Staff.'

*Sit down,' said Kravtsov.

I sat. He looked me straight in the eyes for a long time, and I withstood hisstare. He was smartly turned out and looked very stern, without a suspicion ofa smile.

Tou, Viktor, are entering into a very serious business. You are joining theTenth, but I believe that's only a cover. It seems to me that you will gosomewhere higher up. Maybe even into the GRU. Into the Aquarium. Theyare simply not allowed to talk about it. But mark my words. You will arrive atthe Tenth Chief, but you will be taken over by another outfit. That's the way itwill probably be. If my assessment of what is going on is correct, then you willhave to go through very serious examinations. If you wish to pass them youmust always be yourself. There is something crooked, something faulty aboutyou. Don't try to conceal it.'

'I am not going to conceal it.'

*And be good and kind. Always be good. All your life. Promise me?'

*I promise.'

'If you have to kill a man, be kind! Smile at him before you kill him.'

*ril try.'

*But if you are going to be killed don't whine or weep. That will never beforgiven. Smile when they are trying to kill you. Smile at the executioner. By sodoing you will make yourself immortal. Every one of us has to die some time.Die like a man, Viktor. Die with pride. Promise?'

Next day a green coach dehvered a group of officers to a deserted railwaystation where a military train was being put together. They had all beensummoned to Moscow by the Tenth Chief Directorate of the General Staff.They were all going to become military advisers in Vietnam, Algeria, Yemen,Syria, Egypt. I was in the group. For all my friends, colleagues, commandersand subordinates from that moment I ceased to exist. The first point in thedocument that I had signed forbade me to have any contact with any of thepeople I had known in the past.

Chapter Six

As the train sped along the rails towards Moscow the boundless expanse of thecountry was spread out before me. A child waved at the train from a railwayembankment. Poplars, birch trees, fir trees, ruined and looted churches, girlshaymaking, factory chimneys. More children on an embankment, waving andsmiling at me. One bridge after another. Then the train rumbled across thesteel girders above the Desna river. Konotop, Bryansk, Kaluga. The regularbeat of the wheels on the rail joints. The carriage was very noisy, and there wasa lot of drinking going on. It was a military train, with no outsiders. There wereonly military advisers in my carriage. Potential advisers, anyway. They wereall drinking to their future. To the Tenth Chief Directorate. To Colonel-General Okunev. Another botde was going the rounds. Drink, captain! Bagsof promotion for you! Thanks, major, for you too! Everybody's eyes werebright. We were all litde boys who were crazy about war. Had we gone away fortraining in order to come back capable of inspecting a battalion's kit? No, wehad been carried away by the glamour of war. And these were the lucky ones towhom the Tenth Chief Directorate had given their chance. So drink to theTenth, lads!

There were a lot of us in the carriage. Gunners, airmen, infantry, tank men.Yesterday they had not known one another. Now we were all friends. Anotherbottle was handed round. To you, my friends, to your success. To promotion.But where on earth was I going? In my documents it said Cuba, but that wasonly because there was nobody

else in the group going to Cuba. Many weregoing to Egypt and Syria. Some were heading for Vietnam. If there had reallybeen somebody marked out for Cuba, they would have thought up somethingelse for me. Kravtsov was of course right in supposing that Cuba was just acover. But he didn't know much more. Kravtsov - now a general. I had seenhim after his promotion, but then he had been in dust-covered overalls and afaded blue beret, Uke everybody else, with nothing to distinguish him from theSpetsnaz soldiery. I tried to imagine what he would look like in a real general'suniform with gold epaulettes and wide strij>es down his trousers. But Icouldn't do it. I see him always as he was at the time of our first meeting: in aclean tunic with a Heutenant-colonel's epaulettes and the features of a youngcaptain. Good luck to you, Kravtsov.

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Krasnaya Presnya is the biggest military rail junction in the world. Train aftertrain. Thousands of people. All behind barbed wire and high fences. And allunder the blinding glare of searchlights. Trainloads of tanks for Germany.Trainloads of recruits for Czechoslovakia. The clanging and rumbling ofwagons on the move. Shunting engines putting the trains together. A trainloaded with guns for the Far East. Then some big container trucks, with aguard as big as Brezhnev's. Stores everywhere. Loading and unloading. Atrainload of demobiUsed soldiers from Poland. Then there were prison truckswith long narrow windows covered with white paint. Grilles over the windows.Krasnaya Presnya is not just a military centre; it is also a transit prison.Soldiers with guard dogs. Red shoulder straps. A trainload of prisoners movedslowly into the special zone. Huge steel gates. Barbed wire. A blinding bluelight. Trainloads of prisoners. For Bodaibo. For Cherepovets. For Severod-vinsk. For Zheltyye Vody. The huge grey building of the military transitcamp. The group of advisers for South Yemen - to block B, room 217. Adviserfor Cuba! That's me. Captain Suvorov? Yes. Follow me. A smart young majorled me past a long fence and stacks of green boxes. This way, captain. In a smallcourtyard there was an ambulance with red crosses on it waiting for us. Afteryou, captain. The door was slammed shut behind me and the vehicle movedoff. It stopped a couple of times, probably to be checked as it left the forbiddenarea. Then I was being driven through Moscow. I could tell that we weren'tgoing along a straight road but round the streets of a big city. The vehicle madefrequent turns and stops, probably at traffic lights. But that was only myguessing. I could see nothing: the windows were opaque, as in a prison truck.

What is 262 multiplied by 16? Quickly, in your head. It was not a very

difficultsum. You had first to multiply by 10, add half the product plus another 262.But the piercing eyes of the examiner made it difficult to think quickly. Wipingmy forehead with the palm of my hand I raised my eyes to the ceiling and thenlowered them again to look at the sheet of green paper covering the table. Rightin front of me on the green paper covering the table one of my predecessors hadsolved this very sum in very faint pencil. It was written very clearly andaccurately, but would be quite invisible to the examiner. I was going to makeuse of the ready-made answer when it occurred to me to wonder how mypredecessor could have got hold of a pencil and how he could have used itunder the searching gaze of the examiner. It was put there simply to tempt me.I raised my eyes, then thought again for a second and gave my own answer -4192. The examiner then started his stopwatch and set me another question. Iglanced quickly at the answer written on the table and saw that it was wrong. Itwas certainly a trick, an attempt to thrust ready-made but wrong answers onme. But the questions kept coming thick and fast, as if tumbUng from aconveyor belt. *What is the specific weight on the ground of an American M60tank? Why do spiral staircases in old castles go from left to right and not the

other way round? How many weeks in a year? How much does a bucket ofmercury weigh? What is the price of gold on the international market? Whichfirm produces the Phantom fighter? What is the output of steel in the SovietUnion? Which are the better anti-tank shells - American or French? Whatdesign faults are there in the rotary engine? When was the first Sputniklaunched?' There was no time to think up answers; at the slightest hesitationanother question was set and then more and more. 'What do you know aboutChekhov?' 'He was a well-known sniper in the 138th rifle division of the 62ndArmy.' 'Do you know Dostoyevsky?' What an odd question. Who doesn'tknow Dostoyevsky? 'Nikolai Gerasimovich Dostoyevsky is a major-general,chief of staff of the 3rd Shock Army.' For some reason the examiners gave along laugh. But they accepted my answer: 'Never mind, captain, your answersare not quite what we wanted, but they are correct and they give us quite agood idea of your character. If we laugh occasionally, pay no attention, don'tbe embarrassed.' Was I really ever embarrassed?

It seemed to me as if I had been asked a milHon questions. Then I worked outthat there had been only 5000 - fifty questions an hour, seventeen hours a day,for six days. Some questions needed five or ten minutes to answer, others tookonly a few seconds. You were not

allowed to refer to anything or write anythingdown or consult with anybody. You had to reveal exactly what you knew andthought. What you had to avoid was trying to be too clever, to lie or toembellish things for the examiners. If you tried to skate round some trickyquestions they would catch you out later contradicting yourself. The exam-iners changed round; sometimes there was only one, at other times the roomwas full of them. The examinee was alone from seven o'clock in the morningtill midnight.

There were no breaks. To go to the toilet you had to ask permission eachtime. The request might be approved immediately, but sometimes one had toask two or three times. The food was brought directly into the classroom.Sometimes it was a magnificent repast which made you sleepy; sometimes for awhole day they would 'forget' to bring food and water, yet questioning went onthe whole time. 'What would you have done in the place of the gangsters whorobbed the mail train in Great Britain?' 'Imagine that all the buried money hasbeen divided out and you have received your portion.' 'What do you knowabout Johann Strauss?' 'If you had to modernise the American B58 strategicbomber, to what would you attach special attention and why?' 'How manycolumns are there on the facade of the Bolshoi Theatre?' 'What type of womanattracts you specially?' 'What is 4416 divided by 8?' 'How many vodkas canyou drink at a sitting?' 'Here are photographs of some people whom you haveseen in the last few days—you have three minutes to sort them out into onesthat you have not seen at all, ones you have seen once and ones you have seentwice or more.' The last two days were completely taken up with answering

questions which had already been set during the first four days, but this timethe test was undertaken in conditions of a strong radio interference. Tou haveone minute to cross out on this page all letters *B', underline all the letters T'and put a red ring around the letters 'R'. At the same time a tape recorder wasswitched on which bellowed in your ear something completely different, like' "R" cross out, "A" underline, "U" encircle with a red ring/ Tou have threeminutes to add up all the 3's on this sheet of paper on which are simply writtenhundreds of different numbers. Don't pay any attention to what my colleagueis doing. Begin.' Then the colleague began to shake the table, make faces,shout obscenities in your ear, catch hold of you by the hand, strike your legsand shake the chair. But you were advised not to pay any attention to all this.At the end of one of these days you are in a state of complete collapse. Thatwas the moment the examiners were waiting for, when you had sunk into ablack abyss of

exhaustion. They would rush into the room together, switch onthe bright lights and shake you awake. *262 by 16.' And they shout: *It's sosimple - don't you remember? You've already done it; you did it this morning;it's so simple.' '4192,' I mumble sleepily, and the light goes out.

In the space of a week they got to know practically everything there was to knowabout me. They established the extent of my knowledge in every field whichinterested them. Apart from that they assessed my capacity for work, mymemory, my resourcefulness, my ability to orientate myself, my honesty, thepresence or absence of a sense of humour, my stamina, my reactions to varioussituations, my abiUty to remember faces, names, numbers and titles, myability to take independent decisions, and a lot more besides.

Tou suit us very well, young man,' a grey-haired man in civilian clothes toldme, after I had endured a week of examinations and tests. 'But there is only oneway out of our organisation. That is through the chimney of the crematorium.So think again. And so that you shall have something to think about, we'llshow you a film '

I thought that his face would pursue me in nightmares throughout my life. Butthat was not the case. I never dreamt of him. But I often thought about him,and there was something about the affair that I couldn't understand. Theofficial version said that a GRU colonel sold himself to the British andAmerican intelligence services because he was fond of the opposite sex and thatthat was why he needed a lot of money. Let us suppose that was true. But if itwas just a question of women why on earth did he not simply defect to theWest? In America or Britain he would have had enough money and enoughwomen to last him all his hfe. A man with the information he had would havebeen welcomed and treated at his true worth. He had plenty of opportunities to

defect. But he didn't do it. He went on working in Moscow, where he had noopportunity to spend that sort of money. Which meant that it wasn't a matterof money or of women. So what was it then?

If he had been nothing more than a womaniser he would have escaped andsettled for women and money. But he didn't. He finished up in the cremato-rium, the man I had seen silently screaming. But why, for goodness sake? Itwisted and turned on the hot pillow and just couldn't get to sleep. It was myfirst night without examinations. But was I

being observed at night byclosed-circuit television? Oh, to hell with it! I got out of bed and made a rudegesture to each corner of the room. If I was still being watched they wouldn'tbe taking me to the Central Committee of the Party tomorrow. Then I decidedthat it wasn't enough simply to make rude gestures, so I exposed to the camera,if there was one there, everything I had to show. We would see next daywhether they would throw me out or not. Having displayed what I could I gotback contented into bed and went straight to sleep, firmly convinced that Iwould be shipped off to Siberia the next day to command a tank company.

I slept in that bed like a babe. A really deep sleep. I knew that, if I wereaccepted into the Aquarium, it would be a big mistake on the part of the SovietIntelligence. I knew that, if there remained only one exit and that through thechimney, my departure would not be an honourable one. I knew that I wouldnot die in my bed. No, people like me do not die in their beds. It would reallyhave been better for Soviet Intelligence if it had despatched me through thechimney right away!

Once again I was being taken somewhere in a closed van with opaque windows.I couldn't see where I was going, and no one could see me. Where was I off to?To the Central Committee or to Siberia?

Outside I could hear the sounds of a big city, the scuffling of millions of feet,so I must be in the middle of the city. Maybe at the Lubyanka? There wasalways a stream of pedestrians like the Niagara Falls walking past theLubyanka on Dzerzhinsky Square. For some reason it seemed to me that thatmust be where we were. But there was nothing strange in that, because theCentral Committee was close by. Our van remained stationary for some timeand then drove carefully in to a yard of some kind. There was the clang of metaldoors behind us, the door of the van opened and I got out.

We were in a little narrow, dark courtyard, with ancient high walls on allfour sides. Behind us were the gates, with KGB sergeants on duty. There werea few doors opening on to the courtyard with a KGB guard at some of them.There was no guard to be seen at the other doors. Up above there were pigeonscooing on the cornice. This way, please. Another grey-haired man producedsome papers. The KBG sergeant saluted. This way. Grey-hair knew the wayand led me along endless corridors. Red carpets. Vaulted ceilings. Leatherpadded doors. Our documents were checked again. This way, please. A Hft

took us silently to the third floor. Another corridor. A big ante-room with anelderly woman at a desk. Wait a moment, please. We waited. Come in, please.Grey-hair gave me a gentle push from behind, closed the door after me andremained in the ante-room.

The office had a high ceiling and windows well above eye-level. There wasno view at all from the window, only a blank wall and the pigeons on thecornice. There was an oak desk, at which sat a very thin man wearinggold-rimmed spectacles. He was wearing a brown suit without any distin-guishing marks - no medals or orders. It was so easy in the Army. You lookedat a man's epaulettes and you could say at once: comrade major or comradecolonel. But how could I break the ice here? I simply introduced myself:

*Captain Suvorov.'

*Hello, captain, how are you?'

*I wish you health!'

*We have studied you attentively and have decided to take you into theAquarium, after suitable preparation, of course.'

Thank you.'

Today is the 23rd of August. Keep that date in mind, captain, throughoutyour life. That is the day on which you are being received into the nomenkla-tura*^ and not just into the nomenklatura, but straight into a higher level - thenomenklatura of the Central Committee. Apart from all the other exceptionalprivileges you will receive yet another one. From today you are no longersubject to control by the KGB. From today the KGB has no right to putquestions to you, to demand answers to them or to undertake any actionagainst you. If you make any mistake, report it to the person in charge of youand he will report to us. If you fail to report it we shall know about your mistakeall the same. But in any case any enquiry into your behaviour will be carried outonly by top officials of the GRU or by the Administrative Department of theCentral Committee. You are obliged to report any contact with the KGB toyour chief. The well-being of the Central Conunittee depends on the wayorganisations and people who belong to the nomenklatura of the CentralCommittee are able to preserve their independence of all other organisations.The well-being of the Central Conmiittee is also your own personal well-being,captain. Take pride in the confidence which the Central Committee has in ourmilitary inteUigence and in you personally. I

wish you well.'

I saluted smartly and left the room.

A lake in the middle of a forest. Reeds around the shore. A birch wood abovethe banks. And behind a tall fence was our house in the country, our dacha.There was a tiny beach with some boats turned upside down, and on the other

* Nomenklatura - list of most important posts in Soviet Union which can be occupied only byParty members with special experience and which carry numerous special privileges; the ehte ofSoviet society (See: Nomenklatura by Prof. M. Voslensky, London 1984.)

shore there were some more cottages made of logs. They were also enclosed ingreen fences. And they were also under guard. It was a very special area. Theywere country cottages, but cottages only for top comrades. And it was not at alleasy to get into this area. Oak woods, lakes, dense forests. Here and there redroofs, and more green fences. There was only one road leading to our lake.Wherever you turned you kept coming up against green fences. Beyond ourfence there were other people's cottages. Somebody was playing about with avolleyball. But we were not allowed to know who it was. And he had no right tosnoop on us. On one side our fence is higher than on the other and we hearmusic coming from that direction in the evenings. Very pleasant music.Tangos.

Ours was a very big dacha. There were twenty-three of us living there. Butthere was room for thirty. Each one had a little room to himself. The walls weremade of pine logs. There was a smell of tar. A small landscape painting on thewall. A huge soft bed. A bookshelf. Downstairs was a hall with a large Asiancarpet. We rose when we wished and did as we pleased. There was a goodbreakfast, a modest lunch and a luxurious dinner. In the evenings we used tosit round the fireplace. We drank. We went hunting. There were twenty-threeof us and we had all in the past been officers at the middle level of Sovietmihtary inteUigence. The group included one Ueutenant-colonel, two majorsand one senior lieutenant. The rest were captains. One of us had been a fighterpilot. Two had been in the missile forces. There was a man from the parachutetroops, a commander of a missile ship, a military doctor, a mihtary lawyer.Altogether a pretty mixed bunch. We had been handed over by variouscommanders. Each one of us had for some reason or another landed up in thewake of some

military intelligence officer at the divisional. Army or evenhigher level. Each one of us had been picked out by someone to join hispersonal group. It was out of those groups that the Aquarium selected its owncandidates. Of course, when it took people away from the men directingmilitary intelligence at the middle level, the Aquarium was careful not to takeall of them or even the best. If today the Aquarium were to take all his best menaway from Kravtsov, tomorrow people like him would not be so painstaking inthe selection of their personal staff. Consequently the Aquarium is very carefulabout the way it takes people away from officers at the middle level, so as not todestroy their willingness to devote so much attention to the selection of staff inthe future.

I slept a great deal. It was a long time since I had slept so soundly and sopeacefully. I would get up late in the morning and go down to the lake. Theweather was dull but the water was warm. I would swim for a long time,knowing that the sleep I was getting and the freedom I was enjoying were notfor long. We were just being given the possibility to relax after the examin-ations before the beginning of the academic year. So I relaxed.

A quick friendship ends in a long quarrel. I knew that and so did my comradesin the group. So we were not in a hurry to make friends. We tried each otherout very carefully, chatting about triviaHties and telling not very witty stories.We were sniffing around in a word. Meantime we could drink. There was a richchoice in the huge bar. You could drink as much as you wanted. But we drankonly in moderation. At some point we would become friends and would be ableto trust each other. At some point we would be ready to support each other.Then we would really get drinking, like real officers. But not yet.

We had been carefully measured, and here we all were in our new civilianclothes. Some of us were fated to wear uniform when we became generals. Butsome would remain in civilian clothes even when we reached the rank ofgeneral. That was the sort of service it was.

*I am Colonel Peter Fyodorovich Razumov.' With these words a rather plumpman in a sports jacket with a volleyball in his hand introduced himself. *I amfifty-one and I have served for twenty-three years in the Aquarium. Fveworked in three countries and spent sixteen years abroad. I have sevenrecruitments of agents to my credit. I have been awarded four orders for activeservice and numerous medals. I am

going to be in charge of your group. Youwill of course think up a nickname for me. To save you trouble I will mention afew of my unofficial nicknames. One of them is Elephant. All the teachers andprofessors at the Military-Diplomatic Academy are called Elephants. TheAcademy itself is known as the Conservatory when we are talking about you,the younger generation, or as the Elephants' Graveyard when we are talkingabout the staff. It is possible that one day one of your number will also becomean Elephant and will come here to train some young elephants. Now I wouldlike to talk to each of you separately. Captain Suvorov.'

'Yes, comrade colonel.'

*Call me simply Peter Fyodorovich.'

'Very well.'

'Drop the "very well". You remain an officer of the Soviet Army. Moreoveryou are moving on to the highest level - the General Staff. But you can forgetthe "very well" for the time being. Can you not click your heels when youspeak with your superior?'

'No, I can't, comrade Peter Fyodorovich.'

'Your first job, Viktor, is to learn how to sit in an armchair in a slightly

relaxed position You sit with a stiff back as if on parade. Civilian diplomats

don't sit like that. Understand?'

'Yes.'

I had wondered for a long time how it was possible to organise a secret school

for intelligence officers and train them there for many years without anybodyaround being able to guess what was going on and without anybody being ableto get a picture of us. In fact it's very simple. The main building of theMilitary-Diplomatic Academy is situated in the centre of Moscow on Narod-nogo Opelcheniya Street. But that houses only the administration, the centralco-ordinating part of the academy. The students are scattered in small groupsall over Moscow. They know only the place where they study, and then onlythe inside of it. But

they don't know where it is situated.

Every morning at 8:30 I would turn up for work at the research institute forelectromagnetic radiation of the Soviet Aiinistry of Communications. It is nextto the Timiryazev Park. What the institute really does and to whom it actuallybelongs is known to very few. At the end of the 1950s there was only afour-storey building with columns on this spot - a typical piece of Stalinistarchitecture, in yellow stucco. In those days there were probably no more thana couple of hundred people working there. But the institute expanded at a greatspeed. Now there are large numbers of huge grey six-storey blocks. They arebuilt from grey brick without any facing, in the Khrushchev style, to savemoney. Further on there are gigantic glass-faced blocks reaching for the sky.White concrete and aluminium. That's the grand style of the Brezhnev period.

The research institute is now a colossal complex of many workshops, withvarious coloured pipes steaming in the frost as they weave their way in and out,and with snow-white buildings rising up above the chaos of railway linesleading off into the depths of huge hangars. The whole complex is divided intohundreds of zones and sections by means of barbed wire, grey concrete andwire netting mounted on brick walls. The brakes on a diesel locomotivescreech. Five thirty-ton trucks are swallowed up in a secret workshop. Noentry! The scientists are in a hurry. So areˆthe workpeople. We work in threeshifts, without a break. Thousands of people pour into the wide corridors. Themorning shift. This is big-time science. Have your pass open for inspection!Zone 12-B. At the main entrance the crowd is spUt up into dozens of separatestreams and hundreds of rivulets. What are their jobs? What problems are theyworking on? Better not ask, for your own sake. Yet another passageway.Barbed wire high up above. Show your pass! Carry on. Again the humanstream sphts into smaller streams. It's quite right what they say in ourtext-books: the best place to hide is in a crowd, or a skyscraper.

I am rushing to work, lost in a crowd of scientists working on a speciallyprotected site. The scientists are shut off from each other by walls of fear anddistrust, enormous pay packets and secret privileges. They have been caughtout too often by dirty tricks played on the institute by security officers. Themore you keep silent, the longer you Uve. Nobody asks any questions. Eachone lives his own life within the walls of this cathedral of science. Hurry upnow! It's the beginning of the shift.

My pass is checked once again and then I find myself in a heated

corridor.This is the waiting room. All my friends are already there, the other twenty-two. The eighth group of the first course in the First Faculty of the Military-

Diplomatic Academy of the GRU. For us the research institute is only anassembly point. Time to move into the departure hall next door. There's noone inside it; only a big truck without a driver with an orange-colouredcontainer loaded on it. The leader of our group unlocks the door of thecontainer and we all go into it. Inside there are thick carpets and upholsteredseats, as in a first-class aircraft cabin. But there are no windows. So we have noway of knowing where we are taken every day. And we never see the driver. Heturns up only when he gets the signal and the doors of the container are shutfrom within. He probably hasn't the slightest knowledge of our existence.Every day at 8:40 a.m. he comes into the hangar, gets into the driver's cab anddrives a ^specially dangerous' load from one secret site to another. There hebacks his container into another hangar, gets out and goes into another roomwhile the container is unloaded. Every evening he does the trip back. For therest of the time he is driving other orange-coloured containers around Moscow.The containers may contain detonators for atomic bombs. Or it may be a deadlyvirus capable of destroying the whole of mankind. Or he may be transportingapparatus intended for genetic or meteorological warfare. How is he to knowwhat's in the containers? They are all identical, all orange-coloured. But hetakes home a big pay packet. In such *scientific institutes' as this oneeverybody, from the cleaners and night-staff, is very well paid. For the sake ofsecrecy - to keep them quiet.

One after the other we jump down from the container onto the concrete. Highup under the roof of the hangar a sparrow is chirping away. He alone sees all thesecrets: who drives us, who cleans up the classrooms at night, who brings inour meals and cleans up the dining room after us. But we see no one.Everything is organised so as to prevent us from being seen. If there are peoplelaying the tables in the dining room the doors leading to the classrooms cannotbe opened. As soon as all the cooks and waitresses have left the dining roomand shut the doors behind them we get a signal - like Pavlov's dogs - that all isready. If our door into the dining room is open nobody besides us can go in. It'sall automatic. And the food is good. I never ate better, even in Czechoslovakia.

All the same, you never forget you're in a restricted zone. We are shep-herded around like prisoners, only in greater comfort. We call

the containerthe ˆorange Maria'.

From the hangar an iron door leads into the building where the classroomsare. Our container is taken away and in its place arrives another one bringingthe teaching staff.

We have five minutes to recover before the lessons start. It's a neat Httlecourtyard. The grey concrete walls which surround it are almost totallyconcealed by feathery fir-trees, giving an impression of cosiness. Above thefir-trees there is barbed wire, but what is beyond the wire can't be seen. It'sclear that even on the other side of the wall there are the same rounded roofs as

over our swimming pool and tennis court. Perhaps on the other side of the wallthere is another study centre like ours. Maybe our Polish or Hungariancolleagues are studying there. But they may be Cubans, Itahans, Libyans orpeople of some other nationality. How can we tell? Perhaps it's not a studycentre at all but a missile laboratory, a store house, or maybe a prison forespecially dangerous prisoners. One thing is clear, however: that our walls donot face the outside world. If you were to break through the wall you would notfind yourself in a forest or a town but on the territory of another equally wellprotected estabhshment.

I used to try to guess where we were being taken by following the movementof our ˆorange Maria'. It was not very far. It seemed to me as if our study centrewas right next to the Krasnopresnaya prison. But there was no way of knowingfor sure.

*Are you ready now? Let's get going.'

We are all in the lecture hall. Everyone goes to the safes. Each notebook hasninety-six pages. Top secret. Take out your notebook. Lock the safe. Use yourpersonal seal. Everyone in the hall.

The lecturer is separated from the students by a thin semi-transparentcurtain. He cannot see us clearly and we cannot see him properly. Just theoutline. But he can talk to us without any interference. Sometimes he has tocome out from behind the curtain to write something on the blackboard orpoint to something on a map, but on those occasions he is not allowed to turnhis face towards us.

We are taught by men who distinguished themselves as military intelUgenceofficers. Some of them worked at the very highest level of

the GRU as illegals;the others worked more openly in the guise of military attaches, mihtary andcivilian advisers, journalists, diplomats, trade representatives, or members ofthe staff of consulates, Aeroflot, Morflot, Intourist and international organi-sations. But every one of them has suffered a major failure. Otherwise theywould not have been sent to the 'elephants' graveyard' but would havecontinued their work of intelligence-gathering or analysing until they retired.

Our 'elephant' switches on the security system, which makes the wallsvibrate slightly, and starts his lecture:

'This is what a spy looks like.'

A picture came up on the screen of a tall, rather round-shouldered man in araincoat and a hat, wearing dark glasses, with the collar of his coat turned upand his hands in his coat pockets.

'That is the idea that people who write books and make films, andconsequently their pubhc, have of what a spy looks like. But you are not spies!You are intrepid Soviet intelligence officers. And it doesn't become you to looklike spies. For that reason you are categorically forbidden:

a) to wear dark glasses even in the brightest sunhght;

b) to wear your hat pulled down over your eyes;

c) to go about with your hands in your pockets;

d) to turn up the collar of your raincoat or overcoat.

The way you walk, the way you look about you, the way you breathe, will allbe put through a long training process, but you must remember from the veryfirst day that there must be no tension in your behaviour. The furtive look andthe glance over the shoulder are our enemy, and we shall punish you as severelyfor that as for major errors of principle in your work. You must not look hkespies. Your open, honest-looking faces were one of the most important factorsnoted by the selection board. We study thousands of officers who are potentialcandidates for the GRU for a long time. Sometimes we keep candidates underobservation for several years, during which each of them makes several flightsin civil aircraft and in civilian clothes. The one who is stopped by the police ashe is boarding a plane is no good for us. We need the sort of people to whom thepolice pay no attention.

Now take a look at yourselves: the pleasant, rathersimple-looking faces of working-class or peasant lads. Not a single intellectualin glasses and nobody looking like James Bond. That's excellent. It means thatthe selection board is doing its job properly.

'Least of all should you resemble spies by the methods you employ. Theauthors of detective stories always depict the inteUigence officer as a brilliantshot and an expert at breaking his opponents' arms. The majority of you havecome here from the middle ranks of military inteUigence in Spetsnaz units inthe Army or the Navy. There, of course, it was certainly necessary. But here inthe intelligence service of the General Staff we are not going to teach you toshoot, to use your fists or to spUt bricks with the edge of your hand. You havereached the highest level of intelligence work, where all you need is your head.You will engage in very serious operations and if your stupid head lets youdown some time, no amount of skill with a gun or your fists will help you. Anofficer who has exposed himself through his own mistake is no longer capableof obtaining secret information, and in that situation a gun won't help him.

'Japanese tricks for self-defence and attack and guns and knives are a sort ofsafety belt for someone working at a dizzy height above the ground. We simplydon't provide you with such a belt! The fact is that it is only those steel-erectorswho make use of a safety-belt who fall from high places. One day they forget todo up their belt and down they go. But those who never wear a safety belt neverfall. Because they are always conscious of the fact that they are not strapped on.So they are always very careful. The safety belt reduces that constant caution.

'If your head lets you down, you will have hundreds of professional police-men on your tail with cars, helicopters, dogs, gas, weapons and the last word inequipment. No gun is going to help you in such a situation. So we don't giveyou one. We deprive you of every kind of illusion. Every one of you can relyonly on his own head, his own inteUigence. You may as well know now thatthere is no safety belt. One mental error, and you're down the chute. This is theessence of the way we differ from the popular idea of a spy in dark glasses. Andthe achievements which our service has to its credit without recourse to dark

glasses, sharp shooting or mighty blows with the hand are tremendous. Thesubject for today's six-hour seminar is: methods of

penetration by agents.'

We started to study our notebooks. The training of officers in the GRU isradically different from what is written in novels. In the course of the next threeyears at the Military-Diplomatic Academy we were to hear quite a few surpris-ing things.

Man is capable of performing miracles. A man can swim the English Channelthree times, drink a hundred mugs of beer, walk barefoot on burning coals; hecan learn thirty languages, become an Olympic champion at boxing, invent thetelevision or the bicycle, become a general in the GRU or make himself amillionaire. It's all in our own hands. If you want it you can get it. Most impor-tant is to want something: the rest depends only on training. But if you simplytrain your memory, your muscles or your mind regularly, then nothing willcome of your efforts. Regular training is important, but training alone decidesnothing. There was the case of the odd character who trained regularly. Everysingle day he lifted a smoothing iron and continued this for ten years. But hismuscles got no bigger. Success comes only when the training, of whatever kind(memory, muscles, mind, willpower, stamina), takes a man to the limit of hiscapacity. When the end of the training becomes torture. When a man cries outfrom pain and exhaustion. Training is effective only when it takes a man to thevery limit of his capacity and he knows exactly where the limit is: I can do twometres in the high jump; I can do 153 press-ups; I can memorise at one go twopages of a foreign text. And each new training session is effective only when itbecomes a battle to exceed your own achievement on the previous day. I'll do154 press-ups or die in the attempt.

We were taken to watch future Olympic champions in training. There werefifteen-year-old boxers, five-year-old gymnasts and three-year-old swimmers.Look at the expression on their faces. Wait until the final moments of the day'straining, when you can see on a child's face the grim determination to beat hisown record of the day before. Just study them! One day they will bring home anOlympic gold to offer to our red flag with the hammer and sickle on it. Just lookat that face: so much tension, so much pain! That's the road to glory. That's thepath to success. To work only at the very limit of your capacity. To work at thebrink of collapse. You can become a champion only if you are the sort of personwho, knowing that the bar is about to fall and crush him, nevertheless heaves itupwards. The only ones who have conquered themselves, who have defeatedtheir own fear, their own laziness and their own lack of confidence.

Our 'elephant' had taken us to see young sportsmen in training for theOlympics.

'That's the way our country trains the people who are to defend its reputationin the world of sport. Do you really think that our country would take thetraining of our intelligence officers less seriously?'

Chapter Seven

What happened in February 1971 was something never to be forgotten. Thehead of the GRU, Colonel-general Peter Ivanovich Ivashutin, was promoted tothe rank of Army General. There was great rejoicing in the Aquarium. Thewhole General Staff was delighted. It meant that military intelligence was ontop. The Chairman of the KGB Yuri Andropov remained just a Colonel-general. A real slap in the face.

We knew that the Central Committee of the Party was heaping coal on thefires of conflict and that there was no way of avoiding a scrap between the KGBand the GRU. The balance between the KGB and the Army had been upset,and now the Central Committee was correcting the mistake. Very quicklythere was a purge in the middle levels of the KGB and sweeping changes tookplace among the KGB major-generals and colonels. At the same time officersand generals of the GRU, of the whole General Staff and Soviet Army, werebeing promoted. For example, the conmiander of the North Caucasus militarydistrict. Lieutenant-general of Tanks Litovtsev, became a Colonel-general. Iwondered if he remembered the difficulties he had had at the beginning of hiscareer? Someone then gave him a helping hand, at the risk of his own future.For that I had been made captain before my time. But no doubt the generalhimself had secretly helped and was still helping somebody or other, otherwisethere would have been nobody to back him up. And today he wouldn't havebeen a three-star general. Good luck to him.

In February 1971 the KGB and the GRU were at each other's throats. Buthow could an outsider know what was going on? Everybody knew Colonel-general Andropov. But who had ever heard of Army General Ivashutin?Actually, he had no desire for publicity. Unlike Andropov, Ivashutin was incharge of a secret organisation which operated quite unseen and had no need ofadvertisement.

War planning is the business of the General Staff. The General Staff is

thebrain of the Army. Any interference by the KGB in military planning wouldinevitably bring the whole state to the brink of catastrophe. Therefore, in orderto survive, the state is obhged to limit the influence which the KGB can exerton the General Staff. To be victorious in war the General Staff has to see theworld through its own eyes. It must collect information about the enemythrough the efforts of its own officers, who understand the problems ofoperational planning and who are capable of deciding for themselves what isimportant for the General Staff and what isn't. The General Staff has no time to

request information from others; it orders its own intelligence service aboutwhat has to be given first priority. If it is to do its job properly the General Staffmust have the right to encourage its best intelligence officers and to hand outsevere punishment to the slackers. And it has the right. And it has its ownintelligence service. It sees the world, not through the prism of the KGB, butthrough its own eyes.

We were to become officers of the intelligence service and of the GeneralStaff simultaneously. And we were given a very short period to complete ourtraining - five years. Because of that our training programme was moreconcentrated than anyone thought possible. We were officers of the GeneralStaff, and if we were not capable of carrying the workload we would bedropped off at lower levels.

We did our best. We carried our workload. But not all of us.

At night I dreamt only of vast attacking operations. Deep penetration bytanks. Parachute descents. Spetsnaz brigades in the enemy's rear. I dreamt ofgunfire and the sounds of battle. I would open my eyes and hear only therevolting ringing of an alarm clock and feel the rays of a winter dawn shiningpainfully straight into my eyes. I would sit for a long time on my bed rubbingmy temples with the palms of my hands. I felt I couldn't stick it out.

The time passed quickly. The winter term - eight examinations. Summer term- another eight. Fifteen days' leave in the winter; thirty days in the summer.But I didn't go on leave. I passed the tests, but then I had a lot more to do.Practically no one in our group did. There was so much work to be done, moreand more of it. If you wanted to keep on top of it you simply had to work. Tillgreen rings and black spots danced before your eyes. Nobody stopped usworking. We could sit up all night. We could sleep only three hours a night ifwe wanted

to.

Our group was slowly shrinking. The heutenant-colonel was expelled ongrounds of immorahty - sexual excesses. He was exiled to the space centre atPlesetsk. It was also a GRU posting, but in fact a banishment for offenders.The major from artillery reconnaissance was expelled for drunkenness. He wassent back to Spetsnaz in the Baikal district. The group was shrinking. Therehad been twenty-three of us. Now there were only seventeen. They expelledthose who began to have fainting fits from the strain of work. They expelledthose who could not tell when they were being followed and those who mademistakes or lost their tempers when taking decisions. They expelled those whocouldn't learn two foreign languages, learn the history of diplomacy and ofinteUigence work, the whole structure, tactics, strategy, armament andforward planning of our Army and the armies of our opponents.

They would disappear without warning. They would never again get pro-moted to the top. They would be found places where there would be no onewhom they could tell about where they had been. They would be found places

where there were only similar drop-outs from the GRU, where mutualsuspicion and provocation flourished. Where, in fact, do they not flourish?

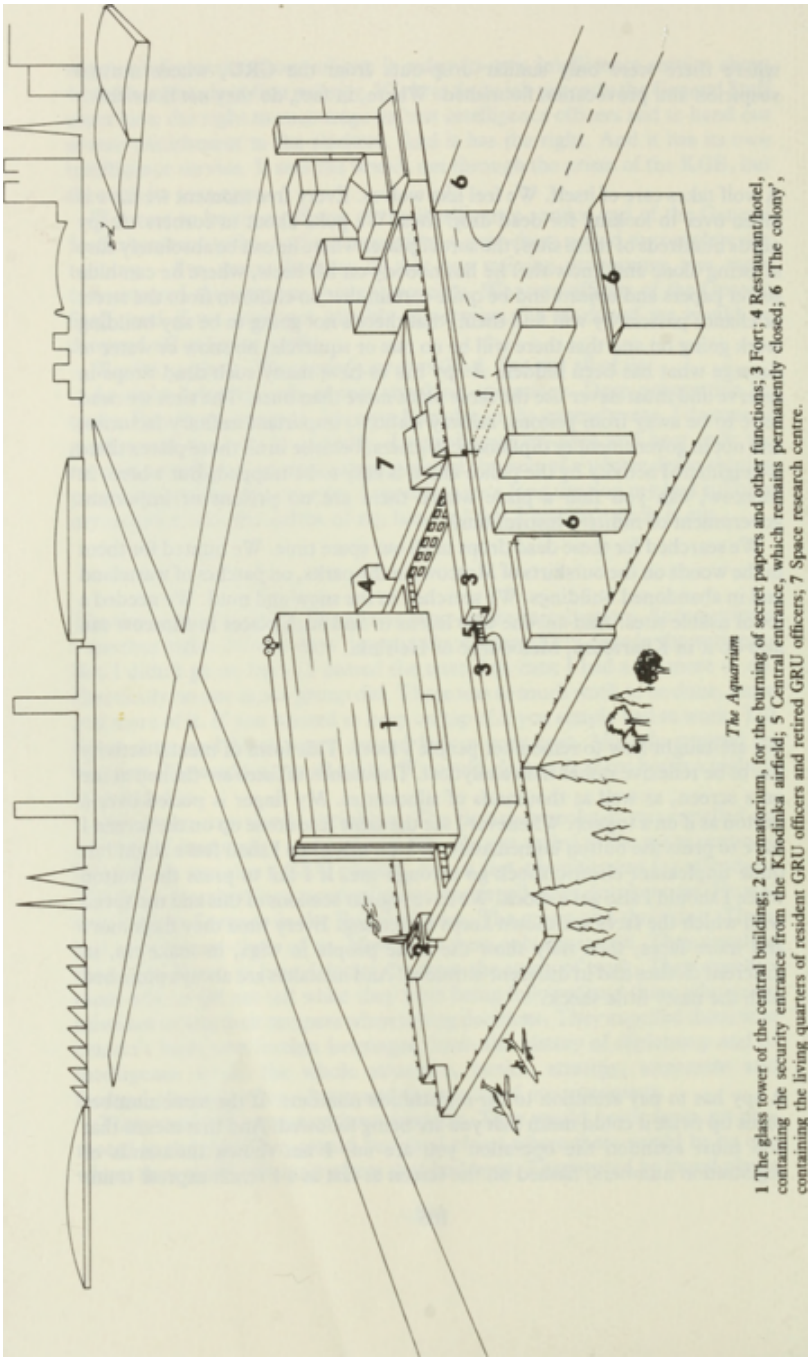
A wolf takes care of itself. We feel like wolves. Every free moment we have isgiven over to looking for dead drop sites. We poke about in corners. A spyneeds hundreds of these sites, the sort of places where he can be absolutely sureof being alone and know that he has nobody on his heels, where he can hidesecret papers and objects and be quite certain that no children from the streetor chance passers-by will find them, that there's not going to be any buildingwork going on and that there will be no rats or squirrels, no snow or water todamage what has been hidden. A spy has to have many such dead drops inreserve and must never use the same place more than once. The sites we needhave to be away from prisons, railway stations, important military factories,and not in government or diplomatic districts, because in all those places thereis heightened activity by the poHce and it is easy to be trapped. But where, inMoscow, can you find a place where there are no prisons or importantgovernment or military institutions?

We searched for these dead drops in all our spare time. We hunted for themin the woods on the outskirts of Moscow, in the parks, on patches

of wastelandand in abandoned buildings. We searched in the snow and mud. We needed alot of usable sites. And anyone who learns to find such places in Moscow canalso do it in Khartoum, Melbourne or Helsinki.

We are taught how to remember people's faces. This form of mental activityhas to be reflexive rather than analytical. Thousands of faces are flashed at meon a screen, as well as thousands of silhouettes. My finger is poised over abutton as if on a trigger. Whenever I see the same face come up on the screen Ihave to press the button immediately. If I am mistaken I shall feel a sHght butquite unpleasant electric shock go through me. If I fail to press the buttonwhen I should I also get a shock. We have regular sessions of this and the speedwith which the faces are shown keeps increasing. Every time they flash moreand more faces, then they show the same people in wigs, in make-up, indifferent clothes and in different attitudes. And mistakes are always punishedwith the nasty little shock.

A spy has to pay attention to car registration numbers. If the same numberturns up twice it could mean that you are being followed. And that means thatyou must abandon the operation you are on. I am shown thousands ofregistration numbers, flashed on the screen as fast as a French express train.



The Aquarium

1 The glass tower of the central building; 2 Crematorium, for the burning of secret papers and other functions; 3 Fort; 4 Restaurant/hotel, containing the security entrance from the Khodinka airfield; 5 Central entrance, which remains permanently closed; 6 'The colony', containing the living quarters of resident GRU officers and retired GRU officers; 7 Space research centre.

There is no need to memorise them, only to recognise them. An analyticalmind is of no use in this: you need an automatic reflex. And they are developingit in me, as with dogs, by the Pavlovian method. Mistake - shock; mistake -shock.

But the numbers on cars can be quickly changed, so you need to be able torecognise cars not only by their numbers but simply by their appearance. In amodern city, however, there are milhons of cars and our brains are not capableof memorising even hundreds, especially when so many of them are identical.This is where the spy's reflexes come into play. Our brains are capable of takingin milhons of details, but we are simply not able to make use of that colossalstore of information. Never mind: the Aquarium will teach us. In five years'time we shall have the right reflexes!

We are General Staff officers. So we are taken to Gogol Boulevard to learn howto take decisions in the course of large-scale operations. On huge maps and onthe hmitless expanses of the Shirokolanov training ground, at first with muchhesitation and little confidence and only on paper, but later in practice, we tryto direct the movments of huge masses of troops in modern warfare. Maybe wewill never have to do it in reahty but, once having moved the 5th and 7thGuards Tank Armies on the map from Belorussia into Poland, you suddenlyrealise exactly what information and what a quantity of information is neededby the General Staff to make such a move in a real war.

We searched for dead drop sites all over the city. We learnt how to detect withcertainty whether we were being followed. Before any operation, an intelh-gence officer must be absolutely certain in himself whether he is being followedor not. A straight yes or no. In today's secret war for which he is being trainednobody can help him and nobody will share the responsibility for any mistakesmade.

Yes or no. I followed a previously worked-out route, twisting and turningaround Moscow for four hours. I switched taxis, buses and trams. I left thedense crowds at the centre and reached the deserted parts of the city, thendived once again into the crowds. The KGB also had something to learn. It isvery important for it to learn about its own mistakes in following people. In thisthe interests of KGB and GRU coincide, and these two hostile organisationscooperate. The 'Elephant' knew that I was training in the city that day and thatmy training would begin at 1500 hours at the Metropole hotel, which was beingtreated as if it were a Soviet embassy in a hostile country. Once I left the'embassy' it was up to the 'Elephant' to decide whether to phone the KGB ornot. Yes or no. Once a week the 'Elephant' would send each of us out ondifferent routes which we prepared ourselves. Last time there had been no

doubt at all that I was being followed. I had been quite sure. But now? Yesor no? I wasn't sure. I didn't want to have to return to the 'embassy' andreport to the 'Elephant' that I wasn't sure. If I did, he would send me outagain to walk around Moscow and I would have to give a definite answer bythe next morning. Yes or no. A spy's eyes are one of his most importanttools.

His tongue is another. The Aquarium does everything possible to persuadeits officers to acquire foreign languages. For knowing one Western languagethey raise your salary by 10 per cent. For every Oriental language they payyou an extra 20 per cent. So if you learn five Oriental languages you candouble your salary. But not to learn two languages would mean being sentoff to the Plesetsk space centre, and I had no desire at all to go there. So Istudied hard. It was a big problem for me to learn a foreign language: I justdon't have a musical ear. My hearing was damaged through working withtanks and their guns. I did my best, but in language studies I was the worstin the group. There had been others worse than I was, but they had alreadybeen dropped. I was next in line. Even if my pronunciation was awful, Iwould catch up in other respects or die in the attempt.

'I had the same problem,' said Elephant by way of encouragement. 'Learnoff whole pages by heart. That's the way to acquire fluency. Then you willalways have in hand a supply of everyday phrases and whole sentences foruse in speaking and writing.'

So I learnt whole pages by heart. Then I would write them down. ThenI'd re-write them. I would do it from memory thirty times over so that Icould do it without mistakes.

My eyes served me even worse than my tongue. I had had experience inthe Spetsnaz of staring dogs in the eye. But this was no longer sufficient.They trained us to use a mirror, to look yourself in the eyes withoutblinking, or shifting your gaze. If you are trying to recruit someone you havefirst of all to withstand his stare. Friendship begins with a smile; recruitmentwith a stare. If you can't withstand the first earnest stare of your interlocutorthere's no use trying to recruit him later, because he is mentally yoursuperior. He won't fall for you.

I left the underground at the Krasnaya Presnya station and headed for thezoological gardens. If you ever have the same problem, go along theretowards closing time: there will be nobody to bother you. I stared the tigersand leopards in the eyes. I strained my will and clenched my teeth. Themotionless yellow eyes of those awe-inspiring beasts held my gaze. I clenchedmy fists tighter, digging my nails into my palms.

You have carefully to nar-row your eyes and then open them wide very slowly, so that you don'tbUnk. It makes the eyes burn and tears come welling into them. Anothermoment and I blinked. The huge, lazy brown cat-like creature smiled at me

contemptuously and turned its head away in disappointment, as if to say,Tou're too weak to try those games with me, Suvorov.'

Never mind, big cat. I am not easily put off. Fll come here again nextSunday. And the next, and the next. Vm pretty tough too.

Once again the days and nights began to fly by, scarcely distinguishable fromone another. Our course could well have been spread over ten years, but it hadbeen compressed into five and for that reason not everybody could see itthrough. Perhaps this was in itself also a sort of examination? Perhaps this wasthe main point of our training - to get rid of the weaker ones now while theywere in the Soviet Union, so as not to have to do it later?

In spy work there is one quite simple rule: breakaway forbidden! If you havediscovered that there are people following you, first of all don't give anyindication that you've noticed them, don't behave nervously and don't startrushing about - you are, after all, a diplomat. Better to go on wandering roundthe city. You must not, of course, carry on with the operation you wereengaged on. They may pretend they have stopped following you, while inreality they are close by you, only with more people and different ones.Whenever you discover you are being followed, you must without exceptionsuspend your operation, however urgent it may be. Every operation is plannedin many different versions. You're being followed today, so we will repeat theoperation tomorrow, or in a week's time, or in a month. But don't dream oftrying to break away from your tail. Even if you break away for the very best ofreasons you will be telling them that you are a spy and not just a diplomat, thatyou know how to detect that you are being followed secretly, and that you havesome reason or other for evading them. If you let them see that, they will neverlet you out of their sight. They will follow you every day and never give you achance to do your work. You may, of course, get away from them once, butthey will then class you as a dangerous man, and you will never get away fromthem again. Instead you will have thirty of them on your heels every single day.That is why breaking away is forbidden. But not on that day

That day we are given permission to break away. To hell with yourdiplomatic careers,' said Elephant. There are situations in which the Aquar-ium orders you to carry through an operation at any price. So break away!'

There were two of us. Genka and I. Break away, he said. Just try and do it inMoscow, where it was already dark and cold and empty. In three days Moscowwould be drinking and having fun. There would be celebrations, parades andbands on the streets. But on that day, just before it exploded in a bout ofdrunken joy, Moscow had fallen silent. There were the two of us, Genka and I,and some dark shadows behind us. Our own shadows, and someone else's.

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They were running all over the place, not trying to conceal themselves. If eachof us had been on his own we would have got away from them long ago.Breaking away was forbidden, but we had been taught how to do it.

The first time we made a dash for it was when we were in the PetrovskyArcade. It was a good place. Lots of people there. We dived into the crowd,pushing people aside, rushing up narrow stairs, into the crowd again, out of theback door and into the underground. But the shadows were still on our tailsand wouldn't be shaken off. When the train reached the Lenin Hills station wehad another try. Just before the doors closed as the train moved off we hoppedoff on to the platform. But our shadows were too smart for us.

Moscow was empty. Cold and dark. But Genka knew of some other place onMarina Raskova Square. Let's go, then!

The bastards! How many could there be of them? A great many, curse it. Itwas a pity we were not allowed to separate. It was a two-man operation. Shouldwe separate anyway, Genka? No, that would be to exceed our rights. But whatif the operation was a failure - would that be better? Genka led me around someempty side streets where he had a place he had prepared long ago. Then wewere running down the lanes. But it was no good: there were three big youthsright behind us making no attempt to conceal themselves. The tail wasdeliberately conspicuous, intended to play on our nerves. There were manymore following us without being seen. More side streets, and now there werethree of them behind us, laughing openly at us. 'What if they try to get away?' aloud voice behind us asked. 'We would catch 'em up,' another voice repliedreassuringly. More laughter in our backs. Then

Genka gave me a dig in theribs, meaning 'get ready'. I was ready: only snow was falling Ughtly on us. Thevery first snow. It would have been nicer to be strolling down the street andsavouring the crystal air. But that was not for us. It was time to break away.

Genka grabs me by the hand and we fly into a door and down and then upsome filthy stairs and along dark corridors, trying not to break our legs. Downanother stairway. Some buckets and an awful smell. Another door and morestairs and corridors. Genka is out of breath, though he is a good runner. He isbig and heavy. But he has cat's eyes in the dark. More doorways, rags, rubbleand broken glass. Then we come out on to the street, goodness knows where. Ihave walked the whole of Moscow but have never come across such placesbefore. There are three side streets ahead of us. Genka pulls me into the firstone. It seems we have got away. It is a good place Genka has found. How manymonths has he been traipsing round Moscow to find it? A place like that oughtto be framed in gold, to be shown to young spies: see what a magnificent place itis! A model. If you are going to work in London, New York or Tokyo -everyone ought to have such a place for himself. So as to be able at any time toget away from the police. But it won't do us any good today. Snow is fallinglightly over Moscow. The first. It stuck to the soles of our shoes so that Genka'sand my tracks are as clear as those of the first astronauts on the Moon. It'sknown as Murphy's law. According to that unbreakable law, a slice of breadand butter always hits the ground butter downwards. We'll never get away,

Genka! Yes we will. And Genka drags me by the hand. Empty Moscow.Honest citizens have all shut themselves away in their little homes. There isonly Genka and I in the whole of Moscow ... and the big boys from the KGB.Genka is out of breath again. Are you scared to jump off a train, Vitya? he asks.No, Genka, I am not scared. I have a chance. You go on the operation and I'llcover you from behind. We'll run down the sidestreets and courtyards, and ifwe come out on the main road we'll leave no tracks, but there will be their carsand you can't get away from them.

We hop over a fence and there is a train platform and the screech of a train'sbrakes. Genka is puffing. And behind us are three big boys, also puffing. Theyhave also jumped over the fence like mad horses. Genka pulls me into the train.We scramble into the last door and run down the centre of the carriage. If onlythe door will slam behind us! But it doesn't slam. There is a noise like gallopinghorses behind us and our

three followers are also in the carriage and runningafter us. We rush through one carriage and then another. Genka pushes meahead but holds back himself. He goes like a fighter plane into a head-onattack. He is a tough lad, Genka. But they are tough too. They are fighting itout in the carriage, while I get to the door. If only it will stay open now! I throwthe whole weight of my body against one half of the door, while the other halfchcks shut behind my back and the train moves off.

You should always jump off a moving train backwards and to the rear. But Iremember that only much later. I shoot out of the door forwards and towardsthe front. You ought to keep your teeth clenched together, but I forget thattoo, so they they come together like a trap and nearly bite off the end of mytonge. The train hasn't got up much speed when I shoot out of it and I'm not faroff the ground: the platform is a lone one. Only I twist my ankle as I fall and cutmy hand. To hell with that: I jump up and the end carriage bumps past me, thebrakes screeching. The KGB men have pulled the emergency brake. Theyhave been trained too. I am acting as I would in a real situation, and so are they.They have examinations to pass; they are constantly being assessed. They needto catch me now at any price. But they bloody well won't! I rush towards thefence and over the top. Let's put on some speed! Thanks, Genka!

It is already after midnight. The trains are now quite empty. I rush through thesubways and dark sidestreets and then dive into the underground. There I amsure that no car can follow, so the KGB people will have to keep close to me.But the carriage is empty. It's late, and I have got clean away. The mostimportant thing now is to keep out of sight of the television cameras. There aremore than you can count in every underground station. If the KGB have losttrack of me they will already have sent a description of me to the central controlpoint. All the cameras will long have been scanning underground Moscow.

But I have already had experience of this. I'll get out at the Izmailovo Parkstation, where I've discovered only four TV cameras and know precisely where

they are situated. If I travel in the last carriage I can slip quickly past thecamera there into the underground passage where there is a concrete barrierwith a narrow gap for pedestrians and a dozen footpaths leading into a densewood. Try and find me there!

The first snow squeaks beneath my feet. But it has already been troddendown on the footpaths. In the evening crowds of elderly pensioners strollthere, and further on among the fir trees there are always a lot of young people,more or less drunk. Now, later on, there is nobody about. I follow aroundabout route in the wood and stop and Usten for long periods. There is nosound of footsteps on the snow behind me. Reassured, I look round in alldirections, feeling, as they say in novels, like a thief. But there is nobody tocause me any concern. I have got clean away. And I am the only one whoknows where the secret hiding place is. It is right there, in a dark corner wherea couple of dozen garages have been built against a concrete wall. Betweenthem and the wall is a narrow and evil-smelling gap, reeking with urine.That's a good thing: it means that people are not likely to want to poke aboutin the gap. They do their business there and hurry away. But I have differentwork to do. I look round once again to be quite sure and then squeeze into thegap. It is very narrow, and I have to work my way three metres down it towhere the first two garages meet. Once there I can push my fingers in and feelwhether somebody has left a packet. But it is easy for me to cover the lastmetre. Genka would never have been able to squeeze through such a space. Ibreathe out and press forward another few centimetres. I take a quick breath,breathe out and move forward again. What a fool I am! I should have taken offmy overcoat before getting into the gap. It's a long time since I discovered thisplace. I squeezed into it then without much difficulty, but that was in thesummer. I breathe out again and move a Uttle further. Then I stretch out myright hand. A Uttle more, and it's round the comer. Then I spread out myfingers and feel up and down.

Ouch! Somebody grips my hand as if in a vice and a blinding fight shinesinto my eyes. I can hear a dozen voices talking quietly around me, and myhand feels as if it is in a trap. It is very painful. Somebody with powerful handsgrabs me by the legs and pulls. They drag me right out, my nose in today'ssnow and yesterday's urine. Then a car appears from somewhere with ascreech of brakes, although they are not allowed in the Izmailovo Park. Myarms are twisted behind my back and somebody sUps a pair of handcuffs onmy wrist.

'Call my consul!' This is what I am supposed to shout in such circum-stances.

The rear door of the car is thrown open. There I have to protest again: Irefuse to enter the car! But someone gives me a sharp kick to knock my legsfrom under me. They are a tough bunch of boys! I grit my teeth and there I amsitting in the car between a couple of Hercules.

'Call my consul!'

'And what are you up to here, you scoundrel?'

'Call my counsul!'

'Every move of yours has been photographed!'

'It's just a crude act of provocation. I can produce a film of you screwingBridget Bardot! Call my consul!'

'You had secret documents in your hands!'

'You forced them into my hands. They were not mine!'

'You were feeling for a secret hiding place!'

'That's pure fabrication: you seized me in the centre of the city and forcedme into this stinking hole! Call my consul!'

Tyres screeching on the turns, the car rushes me off somewhere in the dark.

'Call my consul!' I shout.

They get tired of my shouts.

'Listen, young man. That's enough training: stop shouting.'

But I am up to their tricks. If they let me go there and then it means that thetraining session is over. And if they don't let me go it means that the training iscontinuing. So I take a really deep breath and shout at the top of my voice:

'The consul, you bastards, call my consul. I am an innocent diplomat! Theconsul!'

'Call my consul!'

There is no shortage of light. Two arc-lamps shine straight into my face,bringing tears to my eyes. Call the consul! They sit me down on a chair, and abig scowling character takes up position behind me. Call the consul! I standup. But the big fellow presses his huge hands on my shoulders and sits me inthe chair again. As soon as the pressure on my shoulders eases I again try tostand up. The big fellow again presses me

down into the chair and brings hisheavy boot into play as well. He skilfully knocks my feet from under me, like awrestler, so that I fall into the chair again. I get a sharp kick on the shin thathurts. From somewhere beyond the Hghts I can hear a voice saying:

'You're a spy!'

'Call my consul. I am a diplomat of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics!'

'Everything you've done has been recorded on film!'

'It's been faked! It's a crude provocation! Call the consul!'

I try again to stand up. But the big fellow knocks my left leg from under mewith a quick movement of his big boot, the way an executioner kicks the stoolfrom beneath his victim. Then I lost my balance. Again I feel pain. He hasgiven me a very light kick, but on the bone, just above the heel. I would neverhave thought it could be so painful.

'What were you doing at night in the park?'

'Call the consul!'

Again I stand up. And again he kicks me gently but in the right place. Thistreatment leaves no bruises and nothing to prove that I have been maltreated. Istand up again and again he sits me down with a quick blow.

The big fellow doesn't seem to realise we are only training. Why is hebeing so rough? I stand up again and he sits me down as before. I glance overmy shoulder to see what sort of a face he has. But I can make out nothing. Ihave rings dancing before my eyes from the lights and cannot see. The roomis in darkness except for the two arc-lamps. I can't even tell whether it is abig room or a small one. It is probably pretty big, because there is anunbearable heat coming from the lights, but occasionally there is a cooldraught blowing through. It is never like that in a small room.

'You have broken the law '

Tell it to my consul.'

I am in pain and have no desire to get another blow on the leg, so I decideto repeat my attempt at standing up only three more times. Then I willsimply remain seated. I don't really want to get out of the wooden chair atall. But I try. I dig my feet into the brick floor, carefully transfer the weightof my body on to the muscles of my legs, take a deep breath and force myselfupwards. He strikes me just as I am pushing myself up. My left foot shootsup and I fall into the chair again with a httle groan. Pity it isn't a soft chair: itwould have been less painful.

*Who were you getting material from through the drop?'

'Call my consul!'

I know that the one who is kicking me in the leg is under training. That isthe sort of work he will have in the future: standing behind a chair andmaking sure the person under interrogation does not get out of it. It is adifficult business. But he is a diligent student. Persistent, an enthusiast.Each of his kicks is harder than the previous one, or at least so it seems tome, because he keeps hitting me in the same place. When all is said anddone, why do I try to stand up? I can simply sit still and demand to see theconsul, and so long as they carry on not calling the consul I shan't let theminvolve me in conversation. So I'll stop trying to stand up. Twice more, andfinish.

The next kick is performed with skill and great devotion to the job.Consequently I don't understand the next question. I know there has been aquestion but don't know what it was. For a few moments I wonder what toreply and then suddenly find the answer:

'Call my consul!'

I begin to tire of this sort of questioning, and so do they. Then the bighands again force me down into the seat and someone pushes pencilsbetween my fingers. I know their httle game. You can try it on a friend. Amild handshake produces a shudden and horrible pain. A little harder, andunconsciousness follows immediately. It is very simple and very effectiveand moreover leaves no traces. I quickly recall how to resist this treatment.First, you don't cry out; second, you take pleasure in your own pain andwish for more of it. That's the only salvation. Somebody's sweaty hand feelsthe palm of my own, straightens up the pencils between my fingers andsuddenly squeezes my hand hard. The two hghts wobble, shake and swing

around madly. I float away somewhere out of the big dark room with its brickfloor. I just want more pain, and I am jeering at someone.

It is a cold, grey November morning in Moscow. Everyone is still sleeping. Amail van drives past. A street-cleaner, half-asleep, is sweeping the pavement. Iam lying back on the soft seat of a car, with the houses of Moscow speeding pastme. The side window is slightly open and an icy draught is blowing away theremains of my nightmares. I can feel that my face is unshaven and that my hairis stuck to my head. For some reason my face is wet. But I am all right.Somebody is driving me somewhere in a big black car. I turn to the driver. It isElephant. He is my driver.

'Comrade colonel, I didn't tell them anything.'

*I know, Viktor.'

*Where are we going?'

'Home.'

'Did they let me go?'

'Yes.'

I remain silent for a long time. Then suddenly I feel scared. It seems to methat I told them everything when I laughed.

'Comrade colonel, did I give anything away?'

'No.'

'Are you sure?'

'Quite sure. I was right by you all the time, even as you were arrested.'. 'Where did I make a mistake?'

'There was no mistake. You broke away from them and made for the hidingplace with no one on your tail. But it was too good a place: the Moscow KGBknows it. You used a place which is used by real foreign spies. It's a very goodplace, and that's why it's under constant observation. They took you for a realspy, not knowing who you were. But we intervened at once. It was a genuinearrest, but the interrogation was just training.'

'How's Genka?'

'Genka's all right. They held him for a while, but he also gave nothing away.In this business you have to relax. It's no good being sorry for yourself ordreaming about revenge. If you get over that, then you can put up withanything. Get some sleep. I shall reconmiend you for real work.'

'What about Genka?'

'Genka too.'

'Have you ever been to Mytishchi?"No."So much the better.' Elephant suddenly became very serious. 'Listen: this

is a serious training project. The target is the Mytishchi missile factory. Thetask is to find a suitable person and to recruit him. The first aim is to gainexperience of a real recruitment. The second aim is to discover possible wayswhich an enemy intelligence service might use to recruit our people working inespecially important plants. The limitations imposed on the exercise are asfollows. The first concerns your time. For carrying out the recruitment youmay use only your own time, your days off and holidays. You will not be givenany free time for doing the job. And the second concerns finance - you will useonly your own money, as much of it as you like, even all of it, but not a kopek ofgovernment money will be allotted. Any questions?'

'What does the KGB know about this?'

'The KGB knows that, with the permission of the administrative depart-ment of the Central Committee we are continually carrying out such operationsall over Moscow. If the KGB arrest you we will rescue you, but then we shan'tsend you abroad.'

'What can I tell the person I recruit about myself and my organisation?'

'Anything you like, except the truth. You are not recruiting him on behalf ofthe Soviet State (any fool can do that) but on your own behalf and at your ownexpense.'

'That means that if I recruit him he will be regarded as a real spy?'

'Precisely. With the one difference that the information he hands over willnot go abroad.'

'But that doesn't make his guilt any less.'

'Certainly not.'

'So what will he get?'

'Article 64* of the Criminal Code. Surely you know that?'

'I know, comrade colonel.'

'Then I wish you success. And bear in mind that you are doing an importantjob for the Soviet state. You are not only training: you are helping our state toget rid of potential traitors. Your whole group will be given similar tasks, butwith other targets. The whole academy does the same. Every year. I wish yousuccess. And finally - sign this paper to say you have been given the task. It's avery serious job.'

According to the theory, the first thing you have to do in recruiting is to identifythe set target. This wasn't difficult. Mytishchi is a small town with a hugefactory in it, surrounded by barbed wire. At night the factory is bathed ina sea of blinding light. Guard dogs can be heard yapping inside the fences.There can be no mistake about it. But a factory has to have a name. If it says atthe gates that it is a tractor factory that may mean that, apart from armaments,the factory produces something for tractors. But if the name at the gate tells

Article 64: Betrayal of the homeland.

you nothing, if it is something like 'Uralmash' or 'Lenin Forge' or 'Hammerand Sickle', then you can cast all doubt aside: it is an armaments factory pureand simple.

The second rule of recruiting says that there is no need to clamber over thefactory fence. People come out of a factory of their own accord. They go tolibraries, to sports centres, to restaurants, to bars. Around a major factorythere is bound to be an area where lots of workers live and where there areschools and nurseries for their children. There will be a medical centre, atourist office, a park and so forth. You just have to find it all.

The rules say that there's no need to recruit the factory manager or the chiefengineer. It's easier to recruit their secretaries, who are by no means less wellinformed than their bosses. But unfortunately it is one of the conditions of ourtraining in recruiting that we are forbidden to

recruit women. Recruitingwomen, they say, is no training because it is too easy. It's all right when you areworking abroad, but not when we are being trained. It's not really so bad. Youcan find a draughtsman or computer programmer, or someone in charge ofsecret documents or a copying machine.

Every one of us was given a similar task and every one of us drew up his ownplan, as if he were preparing for a major battle. Recruiting as part of trainingwas no easier for us than the real thing. If you are arrested for such activity inany Western country there is only one consequence - you are sent back to theSoviet Union. But if you make a mistake under training and are arrested by theKGB the consequences are much more serious - you will never be allowed totravel abroad. When you are working abroad all your time is your own andthere is no limit to what you can spend, whereas under training you haveexaminations to worry about - in strategy, in tactics, in the armed forces of theUnited States, in two foreign languages. You have to make the best of it. If youwant to get on you have to pass your exams and do your recruiting.

My first move was to draw in my mind a circle, about a kilometre across, roundthe vast factory site. Within that area I decided not to show myself under anypretext. I knew that every centimetre in that area was under observation by theKGB and that there was no point in my going there.

One evening I was outside the zone waiting for the end of the day shift. Astream of people came rushing along the pavements. There was much noise,clatter and laughter. A maelstrom of people.

There was a great crowd at the bus stop, snow underfoot and freezing fogaround the street lamps. People crowded noisily into the bars. But that did notinterest me for the time being: that was the easy way and I would resort tochance meetings only if other ways did not turn up. What I needed now was alibrary, and I had no difficulty in finding the usual factory Ubrary nearby.Anybody could go in and I soon found myself among the bookshelves. As Imoved along them I tried to see who was interested in what subjects. I needed a

contact. I noticed a ginger-haired fellow in glasses studying books of sciencefiction. I decided to speak to him.

ˆExcuse me/1 said quietly in his ear. 'Where can I find science fiction

here?'

'Right over there.'

'Where exactly?'

'Come here—I'll show you.'

I came across a contact on my third evening.

'I'm looking for something about astronauts and about Tsiolkovsky.'

'You'll find it here.'

'Where?'

'Come along—I'll show you.'

Spy films always depict intelligence officers as brilHantly eloquent and witty.The spy's arguments are always irrefutable and his victim always agrees withhis proposals. This is nonsense. In real life the reverse is true. The fourth law ofrecruitment says that every man has his head full of bright ideas and thateveryone suffers, mainly because no one will hsten to him. The biggestproblem for everyone is to find a good hstener. That's impossible becauseeverybody else is after the same thing, seeking their own listeners, so thatthey've no time to listen to other people's silly ideas.

Most important in the art of recruiting is the ability to hsten patiently toone's interlocutor. Learning to hsten without interrupting is the guarantee ofsuccess. It's a difficult art to acquire. But you can make a good friend if you areprepared to hsten to him. I had found a friend. He had read all the books onTsander, Tsiolkovsky and Korolev. And he talked also about others aboutwhom it was not yet permitted to write books—about Yangel, Chelamei,Babakin, Stechkin. I just listened.

We couldn't talk properly in the hbrary. In fact we were not supposed to talkat all. So I listened to him among the snowdrifts in a clearing in the woodswhere we went skiing. And in the cinema and in a litde cafe where we drankbeer.

My friend was fascinated by the various systems for delivering fuel from thetanks to the rocket engines. The fuel can be delivered by means of eitherturbo-pumps or a displacement system. I listened and agreed with him. Thefirst German rockets used turbo-pumps. Why

then had that simple, cheapsystem been forgotten? Why, indeed? Although this method involved the useof very reliable and accurate pumps it would guarantee against a major accident—a burst tank full of fuel due to an increase in pressure in the displacementmixture. I agreed with this entirely.

At our next meeting I had in my pocket a tape recorder in the form of a

cigarette case. A wire from the recorder went down the sleeve of my jacket tomy wrist watch, which contained a microphone. We sat in a restaurant chattingabout the possibility of using nitrogen tetroxide as an oxidising agent andliquid oxygen along with kerosene as the main fuel. It seemed to him that,although this mixture was old-fashioned, it had been thoroughly tested andcould be depended on for the next couple of decades.

Next morning I played the tape over to Elephant. I had committed a fairlyserious technical error: a microphone could not be put in a watch to record aconversation in a restaurant. The constant rattle of knives and forks next to themicrophone is deafening, and our voices sounded too far off. This greatlyamused Elephant and only when he had stopped laughing did he ask:

'What does he know about you?'

That my name is Viktor.'

'What about your surname?'

'He didn't ask.'

'When's your next meeting?'

'On Thursday.'

'Before then I will lay on a meeting for you in the ninth directorate of GRUInformation. You will talk to an officer who analyses American rocket engines.Of course he knows a great deal about our motors too. He will provide you withthe real questions, about the things which would interest him if you had got toknow an American missile engineer. If you succeed in extracting from yourbespectacled friend a sufficiently intelligible answer you can reckon yourselflucky ... but not him.'

The Information department of the GRU wanted to know what my friendcould say about hydrogen fuel.

We sat in a dirty bar and I told my friend that I didn't think hydrogen fuelwould ever be used. I don't know why, but he thought I worked in the fourthshop in the factory. I had never told him that: I could hardly do so, since Ididn't know what the fourth shop was.

He stared at me enquiringly for some time and then said: 'That's the way youpeople in the fourth think. I know how you always want to play doubly safe.You fear toxicity and the danger of explosions. That's all very well. But thinkof the huge output of energy! The toxicity can be reduced and we are dealingwith that in the second shop. Believe me: we shall be successful, and thenlimitless possibiHties will open up before us '

At the next table I thought I recognised a familiar back. Surely notElephant? But it was. And along with him were some other rather impressivecharacters.

Next morning Elephant congratulated me on having carried out my firstsuccessful recruitment.

*It was just a training exercise. But never mind. If a kitten wants to become areal cat it has to start with fledglings and not with full-grown sparrows.Meanwhile you can forget all about hydrogen fuel. That's none of yourbusiness.'

'I'll forget.'

Tou can forget about your bespectacled friend as well. We'll pass his filewith your reports and tape recordings over to the right people. The CentralCommittee needs concrete evidence of the KGB's poor work to keep thesecurity people on a tight rein. But where can they find such material? Well,there it is!' Elephant opened the safe to show me the pile of reports by mycomrades on their first attempts at recruiting.

But I was to come across displacement systems and hydrogen fuel once again.Just before passing out from the academy we were given an opportunity oftalking with weapons designers so as to get a general idea of the problemsfacing the Soviet armaments industry. They showed us tanks and guns inSolnechnogorsk, the latest aircraft in Monino and rockets in Mytishchi. Wespent several whole days with leading engineers and designers, without ofcourse being told their

names. They also had no idea who we were, andprobably thought we were some young lads from the Central Committee.

In Mytishchi I was led through three control points and a whole army ofsecurity men, and in a high, well-ht hangar we were shown a green fuselage.After hearing long explanations I asked why we did not revert to the use ofturbo-pumps instead of the displacement systems.

'Are you a rocket specialist?' the engineer enquired.

'Sort of,' I replied.

Chapter Eight

On the third day following my arrival in Vienna Major-general Golitsyn, the'resident', or head, of the GRU's diplomatic residenturaˆ in Vienna sum-moned me to his office.

*Have you unpacked your suitcases?'

*Not yet, comrade general.'

*Don't be in any hurry to do so.'

I looked at him enquiringly. His huge fist crashed down on his oak deskand a dehcate coffee cup rattled plaintively.

'Because we have a plane leaving for Moscow on Friday. I'll send you backthere, you lazy devil. How many agents have you recruited?'

I left the general's office and burst, blushing with shame, into the mainoffice of the residentura, where not a soul paid the sHghtest attention to myentry. They were all too busy. Three of them were bent over a huge map ofthe city. One was hastily typing something out on a typewriter. Another twowere trying unsuccessfully to fit a huge grey electronic unit with Frenchmarkings into a diplomatic bag. Only one elderly experienced intelligenceofficer looked up. He, apparently reahsing how I was feeling, said sympa-thetically:

The resident has of course threatened to throw you out on the nextplane.'

Tes,' I said, in the hope of gaining some support.

'And he will. That's the sort of chap he is.'

'What am I to do?'

'Just get on with your work.'

It was good advice, and I could hope for no better. If someone knew whereand how to get his hands on some secret document he would go and try to getit himself. Why should he want to share his success with me?

And so I went to work. In the course of the next four days I did not, ofcourse, recruit anybody. But I took the first steps in the right direction.Consequently my return to Moscow was delayed for another week, and thenfor another. Like that I continued working for General Golitsyn for fouryears. It did not take long to understand that every member of Golitsyn's staff,including his First Deputy, was in exactly the same situation.

* Contained within a legitimate diplomatic establishment (a Soviet embassy, a consulate), theresidentura or residency is the major base for GRU activity abroad. (See V. Suvorov, InsideSoviet Military Intelligence, New York: Macmillan, 1984.)

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I am a spy.

I graduated from the Military-Diplomatic Academy and worked for sixmonths in the 9th Directorate of the Information Service of the GRU. Then Iwas transferred from analysing information to the business of gathering it.Intelligence-gathering is not only carried on abroad.

The Soviet Union is visited by millions of foreigners, some of whom knowthings which are of interest to us. These have to be sorted out from the rest andrecruited, and their secrets have to be extracted from them by force, cunningor cash.

The business of intelligence-gathering is a furious battle carried on bythousands of officers of the KGB and GRU among likely foreigners. Theywork just like a pack of hounds, and it is no accident they are called wolfhoundsor Borzois. The man in charge of intelligence-gathering in Moscow and itssurrounding territory is the soulless Major-general of GRU Boris Alexandrov,for whom any achievable standards are regarded as too low and who is readywithout a moment's thoughts to ruin the career of any young officer for amoment's oversight. I worked in General Alexandrov's directorate for

a year,and it was the most difficult year of my life. But it was a year in which I mademy first recruitment and obtained on my own initiative my first secretdocument. Only someone who has been able to do that in Moscow, where thereare not very many secrets we don't know about, has a chance of going abroad.Anyone who is able to work in Moscow can work anywhere. That is how I cameto be sitting in a little Viennese bar holding in my hand a cold and slightly moistmug of sweet-smelling, practically black beer.

I was engaged on the gathering of intelligence. I had been very busy inVienna from the outset. Not because I had been very successful in seeking outpeople with secrets. By no means. It was simply because my superior officerswere having such success in their work, and every one of the operations theycarried out had to be provided with proper cover. The attention of the policehad to be diverted, the officer on an operation had to be followed and protectedduring his secret meeting, the information he obtained had to be taken overand dehvered to the residency at some risk. Secret letter-drops and meetingplaces had to be checked, secret signs inspected - there were a thousanddifferent jobs to do for various people, and you often could see no sense in whatyou did. It was all hard work and risky.

The Soviet Embassy in Vienna is very similar to the Lubyanka. The samestyle, the same colour. Typical Chekist tastelessness. Artificial grandure.Lubyansky classicism. There was a time when my country was filled with thisfake Chekist grandeur - columns, facades, cornices, spires, turrets and mockbalconies. Inside the embassy, just like the Lubyanka, it is dismal and boring.

Artificial marble, moulded cornices and columns, leather doors, red carpetsand the undying smell of cheap Bulgarian cigarettes.

However, not all of the embassy looks like a branch of the Lubyanka. Thereis an independent island there, a sovereign and independent branch ofKhodinka: the GRU residentura. We have our own style, our own traditionsand rules. We pour scorn on the Lubyanka style. Our style is simple, yet strict,no embellishments, nothing superflous. But our style is concealed under theground. We are the only ones to see it. It is all the same in Moscow, with thehuge KGB buildings in the very centre of the city, no view to all. The GRUbuilding however is utterly hidden from the eyes of outsiders. The GRUdistinguishes itself from the KGB by the fact that the GRU is a secretorganisation. Here in Vienna too, the style of the Lubyanka is on view to all.The style of the

GRU is hidden from everybody.

But in the Soviet Embassy there is also a third style. In the dense gardenthere towers the strict and solemn Orthodox Church. There are five cupolaswith golden crosses, and above them one more cupola with its own goldencross. Why they did not remove this church immediately after the revolution, Ido not know. It stands proud and detached, its golden crosses higher than thered flag. In the early morning mist, the first rays of the sun fall on the highest ofthe golden crosses and fragment into thousands of flashing sparks. I know fullwell that there is no God. I have never been in a church in my Hfe. I have nevereven stood for any length of time outside a church, not even a ruined one,except that here in Vienna, I pass by the church every day. I don't know why,but it disturbs me. There is something mystical and magical about it. It hasstood here now for more than a hundred years. It goes without saying that forthe last fifty years, no services have taken place in it. Its bell rings not theslightest sound, not even the faint tinkle of a music-box. But even without this,the ringing of bells, it is beautiful. The builders in no way strove to emphasiseits greatness, but it is majestic. In its severe appearance, there isn't the slightesttrace of falsity. There are so many colours and patterns brought together, buteach pattern and each nuance blends in with the next, and together theyembody a kind of great harmony. I fear these patterns. I walk past, and lookdown at my feet. If I don't look down, I feel I could end up on my knees beforethis mysterious, beckoning beauty, and stay there for ever.

I was reporting on my first moves. The resident (we called him 'the Navigator')hstened to me without interrupting, staring down at his desk. That seemedstrange to me, because one of the first things they teach a spy is to look yourinterlocutor straight in the eyes, to withstand long stares and to control yourgaze like a fighting weapon. So why did that hard-baked officer not obey thoseelementary rules? There was something wrong. I remained tense withoutdropping my eyes, preparing myself mentally for the worst.

*A11 right,' he said at last, without raising his eyes from his papers. *In future

you will work under the personal control of my First Deputy, but twiceevery month I shall hear your report myself personally. You have done quitea lot in these first few weeks, so I am going to give you a really serious task.You will have a meeting with a real person, a

person recruited by the FirstDeputy. I cannot take the risk of sending him on the operation. So you willgo. The man who has been recruited is of exceptional importance to us.Comrade Kosygin* himself is being kept informed about our work in thisfield. We cannot afford to lose such a contact. He works in WesternGermany and provide us with parts of the American Tow' anti-tank mis-siles. We shall get you secretly into Western Germany where you will havethe meeting. You will be given parts of a missile. You will pay the man forhis services. You will cover a lot of kilometres to cover up your tracks. Youwill be met by an assistant to the Soviet military attache from Bonn. You willhand the goods over to him, well packed up. He is not to know what he isreceiving. From there the goods will go by diplomatic bag to the Aquarium.Any questions?'

*Why shouldn't our officers in Western Germany be instructed to carry outthe meeting?'

'Because, in the first place, if Western Germany expels all our diplomatstomorrow we don't want the flow of information about Western Germany to bereduced in any way. In the same way we receive secret information throughAustria, through New Zealand, through Japan. If all our spies were to beexpelled from Great Britain, it would be a catastrophe for the KGB. But not forus. We would continue to receive secrets about Britain through Austria andSwitzerland, Nigeria, Cyprus, Honduras and all the other countries wherethere are officers of the Aquarium.

'And because, in the second place, after receiving the missile parts we haveobtained, the head of the GRU will summon all the diplomatic and illegalresidents of the GRU in Western Germany and ask each other of those eight generalsthe question: How is it that GoUtsyn in Austria can get hold of such things inWest Germany while you in West Germany can't? You are only fit for pick-upor support work, he will tell them - and the appropriate conclusions will bedrawn. That's the only way, Suvorov, that competition is encouraged. And it isthrough bitter competition that we have successes. Follow me?'

'Absolutely, comrade general.'

'Want to ask anything?'

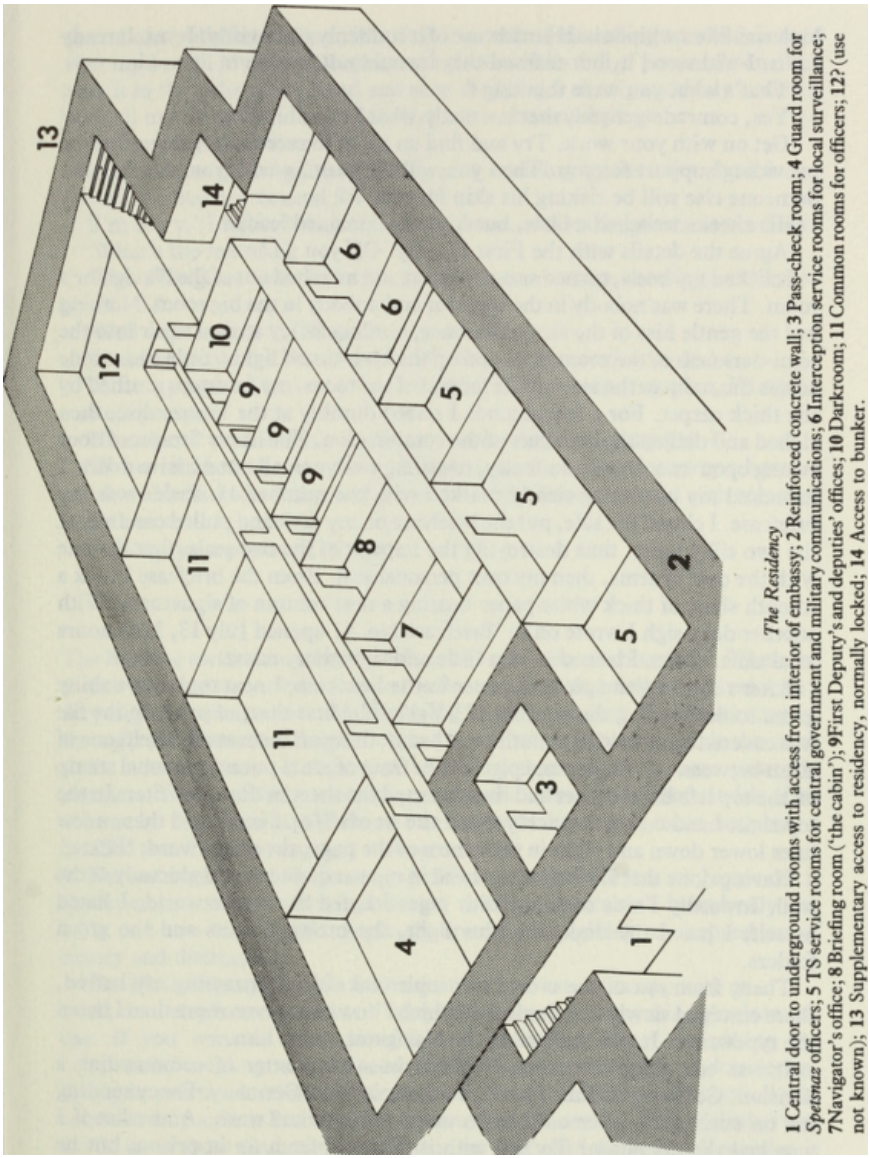
'No.'

'Yes you do, and I know what your question is! What's worrying you now isthe fact that the First Deputy will receive a medal for obtaining

the missileparts, but it's the young captain who is running the risk and won't get adamned thing for it. Is that what you're thinking?'

Suddenly he raised his eyes. That was his trick. He kept his eyes away untilthe very last moment. He had cruel eyes without a single spark in them. His

* Kosygin, Aleksei Nikolayevich (1904-1980): Soviet prime minister 1964-80.



The Residency

1 Central door to underground rooms with access from interior of embassy; **2** Reinforced concrete wall; **3** Pass-check room; **4** Guard room for *Spetsnaz* officers; **5** TS service rooms for central government and military communications; **6** Interception service rooms for local surveillance; **7**Navigator's office; **8** Briefing room ('the cabin'); **9**First Deputy's and deputies' offices; **10** Darkroom; **11** Common rooms for officers; **12**? (use not known); **13** Supplementary access to residency, normally locked; **14** Access to bunker.

look was like a whiplash. He made use of it suddenly and swiftly. I wasn't readyfor it. I withstood it, but reahsed that I would not be able to lie to him.

'That's what you were thinking?'

Tes, comrade general, that is exactly what I was thinking.'

'Get on with your work. Try and find an agent to recruit. Then we shall beproviding support for you. Then you will be working with your head alone.Someone else will be risking his skin for you.'

His cheeks twitched a little, but his look remained leaden.

'Agree the details with the First Deputy. Off you go.'

I clicked my heels, turned smartly about and marched out of the Navigator'sroom. There was nobody in the corridor and nobody in the big room. Nothingbut the gentle hiss of the air-conditioner, sending an icy stream of air into thesemi-darkness of the room. I turned up the blue-tinted light a Uttle and strodeacross the room to the safes at the far end of the room, my footsteps muffled bythe thick carpet. For a few seconds I stared dumbly at the bronze disc, thensighed and dialled the numbers of the combination. The heavy fire-proof doorswung open smoothly and silently, revealing twelve small but massive doors. Iunlocked my own door clearly marked with the number 41. Inside was mybriefcase. I closed the safe, put the briefcase on my desk and pulled carefully atthe two silky tapes, thus destroying the imprint of the two seals, first the onewith the coat of arms, then my own personal seal. From the briefcase I took asmooth sheet of thick white paper bearing a neat column of signatures. Withanother deep sigh I wrote on it: 'Briefcase No. 41 opened July 13, 1243 hourslocal time.' Then I leaned back a Uttle and signed my name.

After returning the piece of paper to the briefcase, I next took out a shinygreen folder bearing the number 173-V-41. The first sheet of paper in the filewas covered with writing, but the rest had nothing on them at all. I held one ofthem between two fingers and placed it in front of me. I put my personal stampon the top left-hand corner and then inserted the sheet in the typewriter. In thetop right-hand corner I quickly typed the words 'Top Secret' and then, a fewlines lower down and right in the centre of the page, the single word: 'Plan.'

Having done that I clutched my head in my hands and stared gloomily at thewall. Inwardly I was seething with rage. I hated the whole world, I hatedmyself, I hated the desk, the blue light, the brown carpets and the greenfolders.

Then, from out of the crowd of people and objects attracting my hatred,there emerged slowly one single face which I now hated even more than I hatedthe typewriter. It was the face of the Navigator, curse him.

It was easy to give orders. But this wasn't a matter of commanding adivision. Go there, do this. I had never been in West Germany. Fancy sendingme on such a job after only three weeks of practical work. And what if Iwrecked the operation? To hell with it: I would fetch up in

prison, but hewould lose his officer and his agent.

If at that moment there had been someone around whose face I could havepunched I would not have hesitated. But there was no one handy. I looked

around the polished surface of the desk in search of something on which I couldvent my wrath. My eyes fell upon a cutglass tumbler full of pens and pencils. Itook it in the palm of my hand and after studying it closely suddenly hurled itwith all my force at the wall. It broke into a thousand pieces.

'Going off your rocker?'

I turned round to find my First Deputy standing by the safes. Lost in mythoughts I had not noticed his arrival.

Tm sorry,' I said without raising my head, still staring down at the floor.

'What's the matter?'

The Navigator has ordered me to carry out the meeting with youragent '

'Well - go and do it. What's the problem?'

'Frankly speaking, I don't know where to begin or what to do.'

'Draw up a plan!' he burst out suddenly. 'Write down your plan, I'll sign itand off you go.'

'But what if events don't work out in accordance with my plan?'

'W-h-a-t?' He looked at me with wide-open eyes full of incomprehensionand fear. He looked at his watch and at me, sighed and then said with reproachin his voice:

'Pick up your papers. Let's go.'

The briefing room always reminded me of a cabin on a luxury liner. When thesecurity systems were switched on the floor, ceiling and walls throbbed with avery sHght, scarcely noticeable vibration, just like the deck of a cruiser surgingthrough the waves at full speed. Apart from that, somewhere inside the thickwalls behind dozens of

layers of insulating material there were powerfuljammers. The deafening noise they made was reduced to a thousandth of itsvolume by the sound insulation so that inside the room you could hear only amuffled roar like the sound of surf on a distant shore.

The inside of the briefing room is brilliant white, which was why some call itthe 'operating theatre'. But I preferred to call it 'the cabin'. It had only onetable and two chairs, all completely transparent, giving an impression ofluxury and distinction.

The First Deputy pointed to an armchair and sat down opposite me.

'At the "elephants' graveyard" they didn't teach you anything that's muchuse. If you want to be successful, you must first forget everything the"elephants" taught you at the academy. Only those who can't work indepen-dently in practice land up as "elephants". Now Usten to me. First of all youmust draw up a plan. Put into your plan various alternative plans and what youwould do in those circumstances. The more you write the better. Your plan isyour insurance in case of failure. If the Aquarium enquires into the affair youwill have something to defend yourself with: you can show that you madeserious preparations for the operation. Remember: the more paper there is, the

cleaner your backside. When you've written your plan start making prepar-ations. The most important element is to prepare yourself psychologically.Relax as much as possible; have a good sauna. Get rid of all negative emotionsand all your worries and doubts. You must set out on the job utterly convincedof success. If you don't have that self-confidence, better turn the job downnow. Most important is to get yourself into the mood of an aggressive victor.Once you've relaxed sufficiently Hsten to something by Vysotsky* - his "WolfHunt", for example. You should have that running through your mindthroughout the operation. Especially on your way back. It is after a successfulmeeting, on the way back from it, that we make the biggest mistakes. We aretoo pleased with ourselves and forget the feeling of the aggressive victor. Don'tlose that feeling until you get inside our steel doors. I repeat: the most importantthing is not the plan but the psychological adjustment. You will be a victor onlyso long as you feel yourself victorious. When you have written out your plan Iwill go through all the possible variations with you. That's very important, butremember that there are more important things. Remember that! Be a victor!Feel yourself victorious! Always. It's very difficult. But do

it. I wish yousuccess.'

I was standing in a clearing in a forest. I was in an old, clapped-out hired car.My papers said I was a Yugoslav citizen. Not a tourist. Unemployed. Mygoodness! It was only then that I reahsed how many of my brother Borzois hadbeen involved in the operation so that I could be standing there in that forest.Somebody had got hold of the car from somewhere. And he had done it in sucha way that no one would know that he was a Soviet citizen who was for somereason hiring an old worn-out car. Somebody else had helped me to cross thefrontier. Not that that had been a very compUcated affair. Somebody else hadobtained for me the sort of papers that would not arouse suspicions if they wereexamined.

So there I was in the clearing. I was completely alone and ready to have myhead or even other parts cut off if anyone had succeeded in following me. I hadhidden a small box containing gold coins among some young fir trees nearby. IfI were to be arrested during the meeting, gold coins would tell against me. Iwas supposed to be a poor tramp: where would I get hold of gold coins? Thereason for the gold coins was that our 'friend' was a crafty one. He didn't wantto be paid in dollars or in marks but in gold. If something went wrong he wouldbe able to explain that they had been left him by his great-grandmother.

There was a long time to wait before the meeting. Huge pine trees rustledabove my head. I asked myself who this 'friend' could be who was ready tohand over parts of the latest anti-tank missiles. A weapons designer? Ageneral? The manager or owner of a missile plant? Who, apart from a general,

* Vladimir Vysotsky: Russian poet and singer, who died young in 1983.

an engineer or a factory owner, was in a position to get hold of parts of amissile? An ordinary worker might steal a single part, but each part wasnumbered. A guard might steal a whole missile, but they were all registered.How I wanted to be a big-time intelligence officer and recruit generals andengineers and obtain examples of the most up-to-date missiles.

What a hope! In my worn-out suit and ragged sweater it would be ratherawkward to meet an American general. What sort of an idea

would he get of theGRU? Not to mention my battered car. Shameful.

It was coming up to midday. Time for a meeting. I was holding a Japanesetransistor in my hand. Some music was coming quietly over. I held the receiverwith the aerial pointing to my left hand - that was the recognition sign. A watchwith a dark green face was an additional means of recognition. Our friendwould recognise me by those signs. He would have none. He would simplycome up to me and ask the time and he would have to stop a httle to my right.That would be sufficient for recognition purposes. It was already time. He wasactually a minute late. Some general. Not much sense of discipline. At thatmoment a mud-bespattered tractor trundled out of the gate, driven by an oldfarmer smelling of manure. That was all I needed, for a tiresome old peasantlike that to appear. I had arranged a secret meeting. For the last hour and a halfthere hadn't been a single Hving soul to be seen, and now this old boy had toturn up just at the wrong moment. In a drawling voice he asked me the time.The time? I shoved the watch under his nose. Go on, get on your way. But hedidn't move. He stayed there, standing a little to my right. What do you want,old man? He pointed at his dirty old trailer. What on earth? Push off. I've amind to.... He also lost his temper. And it was only his anger that suggested tome that he was the ˆespecially important' agent whom they knew about in thePoHtburo and in whose work Kosygin himself took an interest.

I had another look at him. Then at my watch. What doubt could there be?The general never existed. Whatever put it into my head that I would bemeeting a general?

Then I looked at the trailer. There, in amongst a pile of wood and covered bya dirty tarpaulin, were the broken parts of an anti-tank missile. Stabilisers,broken and twisted, a tangled mass of wires and printed circuits stuck togetherinto a ball. I quickly took it all and hid it in the wooden boxes. I shook his hand,and ran to the car. But the German was banging on the car with his crutch.

What did he want now, the old fool?

He then indicated by a sign recognised all over the world that what hewanted was money. I had quite forgotten. I ran to the little fir tree, took the boxfrom beneath the moss and gave it to him. He opened it and looked in withobvious pleasure. He examined the coins. He smiled. Go on, try them withyour teeth, you old devil. What the hell do you need so much for? You're soonfor the grave. You can't take it with you, you know. He simply smiled at me.Then I remembered my

training. You have to smile at secret agents. To smilein a friendly way, with warmth and humanity. So I did as I had been taught. Ismiled. Danke schon. He bowed to me, and pressed the money to his heart. I set

off in my battered old car in one direction. He went off on his muddy tractor inanother. A meeting had taken place.

I dodged around the side roads, getting as far as possible away from themeeting. And quite unexpectedly I hit upon the relatively simple mechanics ofthis particular contact. There in Bavaria, not far from Ravensburg, was thebase of the First American armoured division. The division was alreadyequipped with the Tow' anti-tank missile, and the anti-tank units of thedivision were already firing the missiles, using dummy warheads. When themissile hit the target it didn't explode but simply broke up. It was a genuinemissile but without the warhead. That didn't matter. Our warheads were noworse than the Americans'. It was not the warheads we were after at themoment, but the guidance system, the control mechanism and the chemicalcomposition of all the components. And that is what I now had with me in thecar. The mud would be removed and the wires disentangled. Whatever pieceswere missing we would get our hands on next time. Whether they weighed ahundred kilograms or two hundred. Whatever could be got into the car.

In the Soviet Army, when we fire ˆShmeV or 'Falanga' missiles, miles andmiles of tarpaulin sheets are spread out and whole regiments are sent to gatherup the smallest fragments that fall. But with the Americans it's the other wayround. They don't pick up the twisted bodies of the missiles, the crumpledcircuits or the bent stabilisers. Consequendy there is no need to recruitgenerals or designers. It is sufficient to make contact with a shepherd whotends his sheep on the vast lands near the mihtary base. A forester, aroad-mender or a lumberman can be an *agent of special importance' and forthirty pieces of silver will dehver to you just what comrade Kosygin needs.

I drove my battered car as fast as it would go along the wide Germanautobahns. Built by Hider. Well built. I kept my foot down and wore a faintsmile on my face. When I got back I would apologise to the Navigator and theFirst Deputy. I was not sure exacdy why, but I would simply go up to them andsay quietly: 'Comrade general, forgive me, please.' 'Comrade colonel, forgiveme if you can.'

They are top-class intelligence officers. And that was exacdy how to operate.Quietly and without attracting attention. I was ready to risk my career and myHfe for the success of our simple but brilhant operations. For the sake of ourcommon aims. Forgive me.

It is generally reckoned that a young spy, operating under cover of being adiplomat, a journalist or a businessman, should not be active in the firstmonths of his appointment abroad. He has to get used to his role, to learn hisway round the city and country in which he is working and get to know thelaws, the customs and the way of life. Young officers in many intelligenceservices do just that in their first months - they are simply preparingthemselves for carrying out important operations. At such a time the local

police devote little attention to them: they have enough problems withexperienced spies.

But the GRU is a special kind of intelligence service. It is not like many otherintelligence services. Since you are not being followed in the first months, youshould take advantage of that fact, if nothing else.

In my first months in Vienna I placed a packet in a dead drop, for a wholeweek kept under observation a place where a signal from someone wasexpected, took over some boxes one night in a wood and delivered them to theembassy, and withdrew some officers from an operation when our radiomonitoring group detected increased activity on the part of police radios in thearea of our operations. Everything I did was back-up for someone else'soperations, helping somebody, participation in operations the purpose ofwhich I did not know. Out of forty intelligence-gathering officers in ourresidency, more than half were doing the same kind of work. It was known asˆcovering the tail'. Those who did this work were spoken of with scorn as*Borzois'. The Borzoi is a hunting dog which doesn't need a lot to eat but whichcan be coursed through fields and woods after foxes and hares. You can letit go after bigger animals but not on its own, only in packs. The Borzoi ismade up of long legs and a small head.

Everything in the world is relative. I was an officer of the General Staff. Bycomparison with hundreds of thousands of other officers in the Soviet Army Iwas a member of the top elite. Within the General Staff I was an officer in theGRU, that is in the highest grade compared with thousands of other officers inthe General Staff. In the GRU I was

a foreign service officer, which meant thatI could be sent to work abroad. Foreign service officers belonged to a muchhigher class than those GRU officers who were not allowed to travel abroad.Even among the foreign service officers I also belonged to a superior caste,because I was engaged in intelligence gathering, which was far more importantthan the work of maintaining security, dealing with technical questions ormanaging radio communications and monitoring. But within that upper elite Ibelonged only to the rank and file. Intelligence-gathering officers are dividedinto two classes: 'Borzois' and * Vikings'. The 'Borzois' are the oppressed,under-privileged majority in the upper class of intelligence officers. Each oneof us worked under the total control of one of the Navigator's deputies andpractically never came face to face with the Navigator himself. We wenthunting for secrets, or rather for people in possession of secrets. That was ourmain work. But apart from that we were used mercilessly to provide protectionand support for secret operations at the true significance of which we couldonly guess.

Above the Borzois are the 'Vikings', who in folk-myth tradition wereferocious, perfidious, quarrelsome, cheerful and daring men. The Vikingswork under the personal control of the Navigator, with due respect for hisdeputies but operating mostly on their own. The most successful Vikingsbecome deputies to the Resident. They no longer work without support butwith a group of Borzois at their complete disposal.

The Resident's First Deputy kept an eye on everybody. He was himself avery active and successful intelligence-gathering officer, but in addition to hiswork of intelligence-gathering and managing his own group of Borzois he wasin charge of the radio monitoring group, he was responsible for the securityand safety of the residency and for the work of all the officers, including thepurely technical men. The only people not answerable to him were the cipherclerks. They were handled by the Navigator personally. The Navigator was theresident, the commanding officer, everybody's father; he was responsible foreverything. He had practically unlimited authority. He could, for example, onhis own authority execute any of his subordinate officers, including his ownFirst Deputy, in the event of a threat to the security of the residency in which itwas impossible to arrange for the evacuation of the guilty officer. Apart fromresidents, only the Supreme Court has the right to order the execution of GRUofficers, and then only if it is the wish of the Central Committee. So that incertain matters our Navigator had more powers than the Supreme

Courtbecause he did not need to seek anyone's advice and he did not depend on votesor support from the press. He took his decisions independently and hadsufficient power to put them into effect regardless of the consequences. OurNavigator was answerable to the head of the 5th department of the 1stDirectorate of the GRU. For a number of matters he was answerable only tothe head of the GRU himself. He even had the right, in the event of adisagreement between him and the top brass of the GRU in very exceptionalcircumstances, to appeal to the Central Committee.

The vast powers of the GRU resident are counterbalanced only by theexistence of an equally powerful, independent and hostile residency of theKGB. Neither resident is subordinate to the ambassador. The ambassador'sfunction is simply to camouflage the existence of two groups of shock troopswithin the Soviet colony. In public, of course, both residents treat theambassador with a certain deference because both residents are high-rankingdiplomats and a failure to treat the ambassador with respect would make themstand out from the others. But that pubHc respect is the beginning and end oftheir dependence on the ambassador. Every residency has its own area insidethe embassy, protected against others like an impenetrable fortress.

The door into our residency was green. It was a very low door, and you hadto stoop to get through it. Many years previously some joker had brought fromRussia a metal sign taken from an electric power pylon. It had a skull andcrossbones on it and written underneath: 'Keep out! Mortal Danger!' The signhad been welded to our door and became our common talisman, protected asstrictly as the secrets inside.

'Do you realise that in the last war there were two categories of pilots in our airforce? Some, the minority, had dozens of enemy planes to their credit, whilethe others, the majority, had practically none. The first lot had their chests

covered in medals, while the others had just a couple. The majority of the firstlot survived the war, while the others perished by the thousands and tens ofthousands. The statistics of war make very painful reading. The majority spentno more than nine hours in the air before they met their end. Fighter pilotswere shot down on average on their fifth sortie. With the first category theopposite happened: they carried out hundreds of sorties and each of themspent thousands of

hours in the air '

The speaker was Major-general of the Air Force Kuchumov, a Hero of theSoviet Union, a wartime ace, and one of the most determined officers in Sovietmilitary intelligence after the war. On orders from the head of the GRU, he wascarrying out an inspection of the GRU's posts abroad operating under legalcover. He visited some countries as a member of a delegation dealing with armscontrol or something similar; in others he turned up as a member of a group ofwar veterans. But he certainly didn't regard himself as a veteran; he was anactive soldier on the secret front. Even while he was inspecting us I swear hecarried out dazzlingly brilliant secret operations with lightning speed. We werealone together in the 'cabin'. He summoned us to him one by one. As he talkedwith us he was, of course, checking up on our chief, but at the same time he washelping him.

In between those two categories of wartime pilots there was absolutelynothing, an abyss. There was no link between them, no middle class. Either anace, a hero, a general, or a lieutenant shot down on his first sortie. Nothing inbetween. And I'll tell you how this came about. All the pilots received the sametraining and passed through the fighting units at practically the same level. Inthe first battle the commanding officer would divide them into those who were'active' and those who were 'passive'. A pilot who was keen to get into a fight,who didn't fly off into the clouds away from the enemy and who wasn't scaredto go into a head-on attack - pilots like that were inmiediately made leaders andthe rest were ordered to cover the active ones. Sometimes the separation of themore active ones took place in the very first air battle. All the commanders offlights, squadrons, regiments, divisions, corps and armies threw all they hadinto helping the active ones in battle, to protect them and take care of them inthe most furious dogfights. And the more successful a pilot was the more theydid to protect him in battle and to help him. I saw Pokryshkin in battle whenhe had more than fifty German aircraft to his credit. Stalin personally issued anorder that he was to be backed up in battle by two squadrons. When he wenthunting for enemy planes he would have his no. 2 on his tail and two squadronsbehind him, one a Httle higher and the other a Httle lower. Today he's got threegold stars on his chest and a diamond star hanging from his neck and he's an airmarshal. But don't imagine that it all happened automatically. By no means. Itwas simply that in his first battle he showed himself to be an active fighter andthey began to protect him. The more daring and ability he displayed, the morethey helped him and valued him. If that hadn't happened he would have been

* Pokryshkin, Aleksandr (b.l913): Russian flying 'ace' of the Second World War.

put among the passive pilots from the very beginning and given the thanklesstask of protecting somebody else's tail in battle. As a junior lieutenant. Andaccording to the statistics he would have been shot down on his fifth sortie, ifnot sooner. Statistics smile at some and pull faces at others.

'I am telling you this because our intelhgence work scarcely differs in anyway from air battles. Soviet mihtary intelhgence trains thousands of officersand throws them into battle. In real life they are quickly divided into active andpassive officers. Some attain glorious heights, while others fade out on theirfirst foreign assignment. I have been going through your papers and I like thelook of you. But you are now working as a back-up for other people. Thatsupport work is difficult, dangerous and thankless. Someone else gets a medalwhile you are risking your whole career carrying out the dirtiest and mostdifficult jobs. Remember: nobody will take you off that work. Any commanderof our organisation abroad who receives a fresh group of young officers usesthem on back-up operations and they quickly fade out. They get arrested andare thrown out of the country and they spend the rest of their lives in the GRU'sinformation service or working in one of our 'fraternal' countries. But if youshow yourself to be really keen and start looking for people to recruit,the commander will soon take you off back-up work and, on the contrary,someone else will be covering your tail and taking risks to promote yoursuccess. That's the way to look at it. A few years ago the GRU chief in Parisordered an assistant military attache to be sacrificed to ensure the success ofsome other officers. You can be sure that the commander sacrificed a passiveofficer. He would never give such a thankless task to an active and successfulone, and in that we would support him. The men in charge of the GRU strive toproduce active, daring and successful aces. Never fear - there will always belots of passive, gutless and inert men to protect such people. Don't imaginethat I'm telling you all this because I think you are better than the others. Notat all. I tell this to all the young people. That's my job - to raise your fightingspirit and your effectiveness in battle. The trouble is that it doesn't sink in tomany. We have a lot of good lads who will yet never become leaders, who willcover other people's tails and come to an inglorious end. I wish you success anda following wind. Everything is in your hands: make an effort and you will havetwo squadrons covering your tail.'

'In the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Repubhcs the Minister ofForeign Affairs of the USSR requests the governments of friendly states andtheir military and civil services to allow the diplomatic mail of the USSR to passfreely without it being subjected to any interference or customs examination,in accordance with the Vienna Convention of 1815. Minister of Foreign Affairsof the USSR, A. Gromyko.'

The pohceman read this text printed on crisp parchment-like paper withelaborate patterns and coats of arms. If there was anything he couldn't

understand the same text was there in French and English. It was all there inprint, short and clear: diplomatic mail of the USSR. The policeman ground histeeth and eyed the huge truck. It was rather unusual.

Soviet diplomatic mail passes through Vienna in a great flood, a veritableNiagara Falls. It is one of the main routes for the diplomatic bags. Once a weekSoviet couriers stop off in Vienna on their way to Berne, Geneva and Rome.Later they return. On the outward journey they leave the *bags' - actually largecontainers—at the Soviet embassies. And on the way back they pick up fullcontainers and take them to Moscow. They would usually bring from Moscowbetween five and ten containers, each weighing about fifty kilograms. On theirway back they might take as many as thirty or forty containers, sometimes evena hundred. For losing a container a courier can be sentenced to death. While itis in an embassy the ambassador is responsible for it, under the same terms. Itis his duty to organise the reception and despatch of the diplomatic mail, so itfell to the other Borzois and myself to meet it and see it off. As long as thecouriers are in the country with their containers, they are always accompaniedby a Soviet diplomat who is ready if necessary to remind people that, in theevent of anybody trying to seize the containers, the Soviet Union can resort tosanctions, including the use of military force. The use of weapons to protectthe containers is provided for in the convention, so the couriers are powerfulmen and well armed.

The diplomatic couriers handle a lot of goods. A tremendous lot. Everythingthat we collect they transport in the containers: bullets and shells, optical andelectronic equipment, pieces of armour and parts of missiles, and documents,documents and ever more documents. All kinds of documents: military plans,technical specifications, designs for

new weapons, some that will one day bemanufactured and some that will never be made. The couriers transport whatthe West has accepted and what the West has rejected. We examine it and wethink about it. Perhaps we shall accept what the West has turned down, andperhaps we shall develop an antidote against something the West is planning tomanufacture. All the information goes in green boxes. The poHce grind theirteeth. Such a lot of boxes. Top Secret! In the name of the Union of SovietSociaHst Repubhcs! In accordance with the Vienna Convention of 1815! Offthey go, the couriers with their containers, while the poUce grind their teeth.

But on that day they were especially worried. It was a very unusual case. Thecouriers didn't have fifty-kilo containers, but one huge one weighing five tons!In the name of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics! All the top policeofficers were gathered. They were cursing quietly and looking askance at ourcontainer. I was accompanying the container and I had already produced allthe documents for them. And I had the formula ready: 'Detention of thediplomatic mail of the USSR or any attempt to seize or examine it may resultin....'

The container had been delivered to Vienna on a special wagon and seen atthe customs to be empty. But now it was loaded up and sealed with huge redseals: 'Diplomatic Mail of the USSR. Despatcher - Soviet Embassy, Vienna.'

Now our couriers were in charge of the container. And they were armed. Nowthere was a Soviet diplomat present. He had a low diplomatic rank. That wasthe way it was always done. He had immunity as representative of the USSR.He was not to be touched. An attack on a diplomat was an insult to the statewhich he represented. An insult to a diplomat could be interpreted as an attackon the state itself. The police ground their teeth.

*May we see whether the container is correcdy attached to the truck?'

Tou have the right to do that,' I agreed. But they did not have the right totouch our container with their hands. Just let them try. I was in direct contactwith our Consul-general in Vienna, and he had a direct line to the ForeignMinistry in Moscow. Let them have a look.

The pohce officers walked around the container. How they longed to knowwhat was inside. But you are out of luck, gendemen. It's already beyond yourgrasp.

When the container was transported out of the embassy all our neighbours inthe KGB cursed us enviously, quite sure that this time the GRU had managedto get hold of a piece of a nuclear reactor. The local police probably thought thesame. One of them was moving close to the container, probably with aradiation meter in his pocket, trying to find out if we were taking an atomicbomb. I couldn't stop the policeman doing that. He was not touching thecontainer, just walking along it. Let him walk. It was his right. But his meterwasn't clicking. There was no atom bomb inside and no piece of reactor.Another pohceman went close to the container. It was a hot day but he was in arain coat, probably to conceal some electronic apparatus. He's probably tryingto make out whether there's metal inside or not. Perhaps we've stolen theengine from a new tank? But they can't find out anything with their apparatus.They had dogs as well, apparendy for our safety. But the dogs were sniffingaround too. They wouldn't have any luck either.

Our couriers eyed me with respect. They could tell that I was directlyconcerned with the affair. But they did not have the right to know what is in thecontainer, and they never would know. They knew that it was not the KGBwhich had loaded the container but the GRU. The diplomatic couriers have aspecial nose for that. They have been on the job for years. They know who willtake over the baggage and from that they know who is despatching it, KGB orGRU. In this case they had only to see the container across the frontier, and inBratislava a Soviet military convoy would meet it and transport it to itsdestination.

What a shock both the diplomatic couriers and the policeman would havehad if they had learnt that, once it reached Bratislava, the container was to betransported to the nearest Soviet mihtary airfield, and that there the whole ofthe contents would be burnt in a furnace. But that was what was going tohappen.

For years our Navigator had been asking the ambassador to let him have theembassy attic. But the ambassador had refused. No, he said; and that was that.But our Navigator's department kept growing. Every year the number of grey

boxes with little lamps and aerials increased, the Navigator needed the attic.He asked the ambassador again, he begged him. The space wasn't being usedand he had nowhere to instal his electronic monitoring equipment. At last theambassador gave in. Take it, he said. But it's the

Augean stables up there. Ifyou can clean it up it's yours. Only mind you don't get me into trouble. Andyou've got to clean the place out with your own people. *Is there a lot of rubbishup there?' asked the Navigator. 'Everything there is yours,' the ambassadorreplied: 'I don't know how to clear it out. If I'd known I'd have done it longago. We inherited a lot of stuff from our predecessors.' They shook hands on it.The ambassador gave the Navigator the key and asked him once again not to letother people know what was lying in the attic. The Navigator opened up theplace, removing the ambassador's personal seal, switched on a torch and wasstruck dumb. The attic was chock full of books. Beautiful books - on ricepaper and fine bindings. The books had various titles, but only one author:Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev.*

Our Navigator quickly realised what had happened. Many years previouslythe Party had wanted the whole world to hear its voice. So the speeches of themost learned man in the Party had been printed on the best paper, illustratedwith good pictures and distributed round the world. Embassies had givencopies away free to all comers and had sent them to all the libraries. And theParty had paid careful attention to the matter of which ambassador distributedthe books well and which did not. There developed a competition between theambassadors: who had given most books away free. Their reports came in: Ihave distributed a hundred thousand! But I have sent out two hundredthousand! I've done three hundred! All right, they said in Moscow, if it's soeasy to distribute them, and since the peoples of the world are so interested inthe works of our dear leader, here are another hundred thousand. Distributethem - but bear in mind that the ambassador in Paris is doing better than you.Interest in Stockholm is exceptional! In Canada people are queuing up to gettheir hands on copies! How they managed to get rid of the books in Paris andOttowa I don't know, but in Vienna they were found many years later - in theattic. The Navigator approached the ambassador:

*We must throw them on the rubbish dump,' he said.

Tor goodness' sake,' the ambassador beseeched him. The western presswould get to know; they would say that we had tricked the former leader of ourparty and that we may well be deceiving our present leader. Supposing anarticle like that appeared?'

'So let's burn them,' the Navigator suggested. But he stopped short at once,realising that it was impossible to burn such a pile of books. Everybody knewthat, if suddenly several tons of paper began to be burnt in an embassy, it was avery bad sign, traditionally a prelude to

war. There would be panic in the finecity of Vienna, and who would have to answer for it? Burning them bit by bitwas also impossible, because it would take more than a year to do it.

* Khrushchev, Nikita (1894-1971): First Secretary, CPSU, 1953-1964.

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The Navigator swore, then went to send a coded message to the Aquarium:We are getting the attic for our equipment if we can get the ambassador out ofthis scrape without too much fuss. The Aquarium agreed, and sent thecontainer and the appropriate documents.

For two nights we, the Borzois, carted books down from the attic to thecontainer. You only had to touch them to sneeze for hours. The attic wasnothing but dust and heat. The stairs were steep. Just going up and down setyour heart thumping, and the sweat running. How we cursed our dear NikitaSergeyevich

We had to bring the container close up to the doors of the embassy, cover thegap with tarpaulin, and station a guard. Our neighbours in the KGB eyed theguard and the huge container and whistled with envy.

The poUce officers looked again at the container, checked the papers oncemore, shrugged their shoulders and waved us on. They could do nothing. Itwas clear to the poUce that Soviet military inteUigence had got their hands onsomething very important, and they couldn't imderstand how we had managedto get the thing into the embassy. But since we had done it there was nothingthey could do. And off the container went.

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Chapter Nine

The winds of change were blowing through the GRU and new people werecoming to the top. But the names of the new men at the head of many of the mostimportant departments and directorates meant nothing to me. There were somegenerals and admirals among them. But the name of the new head of the 5thdirectorate was only too well known to me. Kravtsov. Lieutenant-general. Fiveyears previously, when I had entered the Academy, he had just received his firstgeneral's star. Now he had two, and would probably have three very soon. Allhis predecessors in that job had been colonel-generals. The 5th directorate! Thewhole Spetsnaz of the Soviet Army under the

control of that wiry little fellow.He had under him the Spetsnaz troops and agent networks of sixteen militarydistricts, four groups of forces, four fleets, forty-one armies and twelve flotillas.And he was still only forty-three. Much success to you, comrade general.

Meanwhile I was having no success. I knew I had to find ways of getting atsecrets, but I just didn't have enough time of my own. Day and night, withoutany days off or holidays, I was working on agent support. Not a week went bywithout my adding another thousand kilometres on the speedometer. Some-times the kilometres were added at a catastrophic rate, so that SeryozhaNestorovich, our mechanic, had to turn the kilometrometer back on the FirstDeputy's instructions to get rid of a few thousands. He had a special little toolfor the job: a box and a long metal wire in a tube.

I was not the only one whose kilometrometer he turned back. There were a lotof us Borzois in the residency, and every one of them was rushing aroundEurope like Henry Kissinger.

A kilometrometer is a spy's face. And we do not have the right to show ourtrue faces. So Seryozha just kept turning.

The Navigator rubbed his hands.

*Come along in and sit yourselves down. Are we all here?'

The First Deputy glanced round at us and counted heads. Then, with a smileat the Navigator, he said;

*A11 here, comrade general, with the exception of the cipher clerks, a radiocommunications group and a radio-monitoring group.'

The Navigator walked about the room looking at the floor. Then he raised hishead and smiled happily. I had never seen him looking so cheerful.

'Thanks to the efforts of Twenty-nine our residency has succeeded inobtaining information about the security arrangements at the forthcoming"Telecom 75" exhibition in Geneva. The GRU in the diplomatic missions inMarseilles, Tokyo, Amsterdam and Delhi managed to obtain similar infor-mation. But our information was the most complete and was obtained soonerthan the others. For that reason the head of the GRU' - and here he waited amoment so as to give the end of his sentence more weight - 'so the head of theGRU has

entrusted us with the task of carrying out a large-scale recruitment atthe exhibition.'

We howled with delight. We shook hands with Twenty-nine, whose namewas Kolya Butenko. He was a captain, like me. He had arrived in Vienna afterme but had already managed to recruit two new agents. He was a Viking.

Twenty-nine.'

'Yes, comrade general.'

'We are grateful to you.'

'I serve the Soviet Union!'

'And now hsten. We'll do the celebrating after the exhibition. You knowhow we carry out a large-scale recruiting effort - you are not children. Thewhole of the residency will go to the exhibition, and we shall all work purely oninformation-gathering. The GRU's residency in Geneva under Major-generalZvezdin, and its residency in Berne under Major-general Larin, will beresponsible for back-up. If for any reason we have to get out to France, theGRU residencies in Marseilles and Paris will be ready to help. The generalcommand of the operation is in my hands. During the operation I shall haveunder me temporarily the head of the third department of the 9th directorate ofthe GRU Information Service, Major-general Feklenko. He will be arrivinghere at the head of a powerful delegation. Nikolai Nikolayevich....'

'Here, comrade general.' The deputy for information stood up.

'The reception of the delegation, its accommodation and transport are yourresponsibility.'

'Of course, comrade general.'

'In the course of this large-scale recruitment drive we shall be employing theusual tactics. If anyone does anything stupid I shall sacrifice him in theinterests of the success of the whole operation. My First Deputy' - and theFirst Deputy stood up - 'will acquaint each of you with those members of thedelegation with whom you will be working. I wish you all success.'

The express from Moscow arrived in Vienna at 5:58 in the evening. The greencoaches slid slowly past us with a slight grinding of brakes. Greetings,comrades! Welcome to hospitable Austria! No need to shout

for porters: therewere plenty of them. They knew that an official Soviet delegation was not meanwhen it came to tipping.

It was a huge delegation. Officers of the GRU Information Service, officers

from the Military-Industrial Committee of the Soviet government, expertsfrom the armaments industry, and weapons designers. Of course, youwouldn't find any of that in their passports. To judge from their passports theywere from the Academy of Science, from the Ministry for Foreign Trade andfrom some non-existent institutes. But who takes any notice of what is in ourpassports? Do you think it says in my passport that I am a GRU intelligenceofficer?

The most amazing things take place on our funny little planet. But for somereason they amazed only me and no one else. Nobody showed any interest inthe huge Soviet delegation. Nobody asked any questions. Yet there were manythings that were not clear. Why, for example, did the Soviet delegation nottravel straight to Geneva; why did it spend three days in Vienna? Why did thedelegation arrive in Vienna in a single monolithic formation, like a battalion,and then in Vienna suddenly break up and disintegrate? Why did the delegatesset off for Geneva by various means and routes, some by train, some by bus andsome by air? How very strange, to travel to Vienna slowly by train and to finishthe journey by air. Why were the Soviet diplomats accompanied at theexhibition by Soviet United Nations officials from Vienna and not by SovietUN officials in Geneva? There were lots of questions in the air. But nobody wasinterested. Nobody was seeking answers to those questions. Oh, well, all thebetter for us.

In the room used for giving confidential instructions, sitting in transparentchairs in which it is impossible to conceal any apparatus, were two strangers.The First Deputy introduced me:

This is Viktor.'

I greeted each of them quietly.

This, Viktor, is Nikolai Sergeyevich, an engineer colonel from scientificresearch institute No. 107.'

*How do you do, comrade colonel.'

*And this is Konstantin Andreyevich, an engineer colonel from the

Firstdepartment of the 9th directorate of the GRU Information Service.'

*How do you do, comrade colonel.'

I shook them both by the hand.

*What interests me,' said Nikolai Sergeyevich, taking the bull by the horns,*are the arrangements for receiving the reflected laser beam which is used tolight up moving targets when firing from concealed positions '

Tou do realise that my knowledge of such matters is very superficial.'

*0f course we understand that. That is why we're here. Your business is torecruit; our business is to carry out the technical supervision. Nikolai Sergeye-vich opened his briefcase: * According to information obtained by the Infor-mation Service of the GRU, the greatest success in this field has been achievedby the firm of Hughes in the USA.'

*I cannot work against them at the exhibition.'

Both men looked at the First Deputy with increduhty. But he backed meup: That's our rule. At the big firms' stands at these exhibitions, the firm'ssecurity officers are always on duty. So we operate only against the smallerfirms, where there's usually no more than one man on the stand. As a rule,he is the owner of the firm. These are the people we can do something with.'

*It'sapity.'

'You can't do anything about it. Our style of work has to conform to thecircumstances '

'All right. Here are some prospectuses and articles about smaller firmswhich are dealing with this problem. Here is a plan of where they aresituated at the show. Here is a picture of what we need. The Military-Industrial Committee is ready to pay 120,000 dollars for that black box, forexample, because it would take us many years and cost us milhons todevelop a similar system. It's cheaper to copy.'

'Have you brought money with you?'

'Yes.'

'May I look at it? I need to get used to it.'

Konstantin Andreyevich placed a brand new rectangular briefcase on thetransparent table and opened it. Inside it was crammed full of newspapercuttings, business prospectuses and some other papers. At the entrance andexit to the exhibition there would be a pohce check, which this collection ofpapers was intended to deceive. The man turned a little catch and revealed afalse bottom to the case.

What a wonderful sight! The sight of the green printed banknotesentranced me. I was struck dumb, like the Count of Monte Cristo looking athis treasure. How much human effort and what luxury was concentrated inthose carefully sorted packets of crisp green notes. I am indifferent tomoney— or, rather, practically indifferent. But what I saw in that httlebriefcase made me almost bite my lips.

'This is a demonstration briefcase,' Konstantin Andreyevich explained.'The money there is genuine, but there's not as much as there appears to be.We can't take a lot of money with us into the exhibition. For that reason thesecret compartment is made to give the impression that there are severalhundred thousand dollars there. It's not really at all deep. We don't payanyone while we're at the exhibition. We just show them the money. Forthat purpose it's better to use large, new notes. We make the payment a longway from the exhibition and then use smaller and older notes. Likethese....'

He opened an old worn suitcase which was stuffed to the top with bundlesof banknotes. I touched them and picked up a dozen bundles. I smelt themand put them back. The others all laughed at me. Why? I wondered crossly.

'Don't take offence, Viktor.' The First Deputy explained: 'There is agreat deal more money in the second case than in the first one, but youweren't at all excited by it, whereas you were simply struck dump by the first

one. It was so striking that we couldn't help laughing. We're just delighted thatthe demonstration briefcase has such an effect, even on you.'

An exhibition - and especially a major international trade show - is a battlefieldfor the GRU. It is also a field from which the GRU can gather a rich harvest. Inthe last half-century there has not been a

single exhibition on our Httle planetwhich the GRU has not attended.

An exhibition is a place where real specialists gather together. It is a club forfanatics. And a fanatic needs an audience. He needs someone who will listen tohis wild talk and quietly nod his head. That's why exhibitions are organised.Anyone who is prepared to hsten to a real fanatic and agree with what he says ishis friend, and the fanatic will trust him. Believe me, fanatic. My work is suchthat I need to be trusted. I am Hke a friendly little spider. Trust me, and you'llnever get out of my clutches.

Every exhibition attracts the GRU's interest, whether it be an exhibition ofmihtary electronics, of tanks, of cats or agricultural machinery or flowers. Oneof the most successful cases of recruitment by the GRU was carried out at anexhibition of Chinese goldfish. Who goes to these exhibitions? People with a lotof money, who are connected with the world of finance, of big business and bigpolitics. Exhibitions are attended by counts and marquises, ministers and theirsecretaries. All sorts of people go to exhibitions. Of course you have to knowhow to select.

An exhibition is a place where it is very easy to make contacts, where you canspeak to anyone you like without bothering about their rank or position. Butthe GRU never goes to work on the first day of an exhibition. The first day isthe opening - speeches, toasts, crowds, officials and an over-anxious policeguard. But the exhibition is ours from the second day. None the less, theopening day of an exhibition is important for each one of us, like the day beforean attack. That day officers spend exhausting hours scanning the battlefieldthrough their binoculars: a ravine to avoid, a group to be protected by asmoke-screen, a scarcely visible bog where the men might sink in, and overthere space for a barrage of a dozen batteries to head off the counter-attack.

An enormous force of intelligence officers, analysts and support officers wasnow gathered in that pleasant city. But we spent the day strolling round theboulevards and along the lakeside, through the narrow lanes and broadavenues. Every one of us was going over his particular battlefield again andagain, lest he might be overtaken on his flank or attacked from behind.

I don't know why, but the next day's recruitment drive did not excite me forthe time being. My heart did not beat any faster. Not because I was a great spy,going fearlessly into a risky operation. It was probably simply because I wastaken up with something else. It was not the

forthcoming recruitment drivethat took my attention, but the great city of Geneva. It was as though somekind magician had cast me back to the kingdom of the past where all epochs

came together on one street. That street - the me de Lausanne - was the streetof the GRU. At one time it had been the address of several GRU residencies atonce, none of which had even suspected the existence of the others. The GRUhad known devastating success on the rue de Lausanne. The failures had beendevastating too.

It was a bright autumnal day, and very warm. There were already leavesrustling underfoot. Foreign workers, Spanish or ItaUan, clad in orangeoveralls, were busy clearing up the first golden carpet of autumn from the pathsin the park. Why do you do it? I thought to myself. Surely it's nicer to walk oncarpets of crimson and golden-brown leaves? Are you really not moved by thewhispers and crackling of autumn? Is grey asphalt really better? The streetcleaners obviously had no poetry in them. So the httle greedy street-cleaningmachine sucked up the beauties of nature. Had they been a little more poeticthey would have stopped work and enjoyed themselves. So many colours, suchmagnificence! Such richness! Man can never do a better job than nature. Justopposite the entrance to the Mon Repos park was a school, as beautiful as acastle. With a clock on the tower. A beautiful sight. But it was so grey.

Beneath the clock on the school tower was the date: 1907. That meant thatLenin had also admired that school. But perhaps the bourgeois style did notplease him? In any case he Hved here, on the rue de Lausanne, where later theGRU residency was estabhshed and where now there were huge blocks of flatsfor diplomats. I would swear that the GRU's undercover residency was still atwork there, no less productive than before. It was a good spot. Vladimir Richknew where to live and which parks to stroll in. He loved the workers andhated the bourgeoisie. That was why he never Uved in the working-classquarters of Manchester and Liverpool. But he Uved in Geneva in the enemycamp, in the bourgeois districts. He probably wanted to study more pro-foundly the psychology and manners of the bourgeoisie, so as to be able todestroy them and make everybody free and happy.

In those days there were terrorists strolling around the Mon Repos park anddown the rue de Lausanne, dreaming of killing the Russian Tsar - Gotz, Azeff,Brilliant and Minor. When they met Lenin they

probably bowed to him,removing their bowler hats and pressing their hands to their starched shirt-fronts. Or perhaps they did not acknowledge each other as a matter ofprinciple. In any case, when Lenin took power he shot all the terrorists who fellinto his hands and the Tsar as well—whom the terrorists had not managed tokill after all.

I had just one day, the last day before the battle, before my first recruitmentof an agent abroad. I had to get to know the battlefield like the palm of myhand, as a battalion commander knows a battlefield full of craters over whichhis men will attack the next day. But I was not hurrying. I was fascinated by theold park which had seen so much. It was on a bench there in October 1941 thata conference of illegal residents of the GRU in Europe had taken place. As longas the Soviet Union was not taking part in the war in Europe, the Gestapo didnot interfere with its network of agents, although they had some information

about it. But on the first day of war the network began to fall apart, andlarge-scale arrests began. Efforts to localise the collapse proved ineffective.The number of arrests increased, by a sort of chain reaction, like the rings froma stone dropped in a pond. Communications broke down, meeting placesproved unreliable. Everybody was under suspicion. Every resident suspectedall his officers and agents, and each one of them suspected all the others. Everyresident could feel the Gestapo breathing down his neck and the smell of warmblood in the torture chambers.

It was in those circumstances that they gathered in Geneva in 1941, in theMon Repos park, although they were forbidden to do any such thing. No oneof them had the right to know anything about what other residencies of theGRU were doing. Such a gathering was, in Moscow's eyes, a crime, thepunishment for which, if Moscow got to know about it, was death. Yet theyheld their meeting.

They did it on their own initiative. I've no idea how they got in touch witheach other: probably by instinct, as a prostitute can identify another memberof her profession among thousands of women in a huge crowd. Or as one thiefcan recognise another. Or as a man who has served a prison sentence canrecognise, by hardly visible signs, another man who has been in prison.

So they had their meeting. They sat there, probably looking rather grim,under that chestnut tree. Hard-bitten spies. The very elite of the

spy network -the illegal residents. Navigators and commanders. They sat there and probablyspent more time in silence than in talking. Perhaps their silence was a way ofsaying goodbye to life, moral preparation for the tortures ahead and mutualsupport for each other.

An outsider seeing that group could hardly have thought that they were theleaders of an all-powerful organisation which had more than once takenEurope by the throat in its invisible grip of iron. Looking at those men, no onecould have believed that each one of them had exclusive control of a secretorganisation capable of penetrating into the highest realms of political powerand of shaking the very foundations of states, removing ministers and evenwhole governments, making European capitals reverberate with the tramp ofmillions of demonstrators. Who would have thought that those men sitting inthe Mon Repos park were in possession of practically unlimited wealth? Theysat there in worn-out overcoats, ragged jackets and down-at-heel shoes. A realspy must never attract attention to himself. He should be unnoticed, like theasphalt he walks on. Just grey, at least on the outside.

They were wolves at bay. They had no way out. For what they were doingthey would pay the supreme penalty in the Soviet Union; it was known asVertical contact with the agent network'. And the Gestapo was hot on theirheels.

They sat there for a long time, arguing about something. Then they tooksome decisions. They changed their tactics. They changed their communi-cations systems, their ways of locahsing breakdowns, and the arrangements forsecurity and recruitment. Each one acted on his own initiative without

reporting to the GRU about their secret agreement. In any case at that timethey had no contact with Moscow. But they all survived the war, and they allhad remarkable success. Jointly in 1956 they informed the leaders of the GRUof their illegal conference in 1941. They all became heroes. Victors are neverpunished.

But has anybody abroad ever weighed the contribution which those menmade to the victory? Did anyone take them into account when they wereplanning the lightning rout of the Red Army? From the very day that Lenin'sregime was established, people had been forecasting its speedy and inevitablecollapse. People will always make forecasts, forgetting ear her, now vanishedprophecies. Those men in the worn-

out jackets sitting on the bench in the MonRepos park should not be forgotten.

The 'Ascot', the 'Epsom', the 'Amat\ the 'Derby' are hotels in Geneva. Theyare also the GRU's fortresses. In fact any hotel in Geneva in the rectanglebounded by the Mon Repos park, the rue de Lausanne, the shore of the lakeand the rue de Mont Blanc has for many years been the GRU's happyhunting-ground. From those hotels, early in the morning, groups of Sovietofficers would stream across to the left shore. Their destination was the Palaisdes Expositions, a gigantic building with a huge central hall linked withsmaller ones which together formed a vast expanse of concrete floor beneath asingle roof. The concrete was covered with carpets, the space was divided upby screens, and there was room for everyone to display his wares.

It was upon that building that groups of GRU officers of all kinds were nowdescending. If every one of our Vikings and Borzois and each of our cars hadbeen picked out by a little moving light it would have made a marvellous sight.Like swarms of rats slowly encircling a lion about to be eaten. Like innumer-able Soviet divisions advancing to storm the embattled Reichstag.

So many cars with diplomatic number plates gathered in one place! And somany less noticeable grey Fords without diplomatic plates. So many buses andestate cars. The Consul-general from Berne and the Consul in Geneva hadparked their black Mercedeses at different ends of Plaine de Plainpalais.They were not involved in the inteUigence-gathering; they were part of the rearsupport. If one of us got arrested they were there to intervene, to protest, tothreaten a worsening of good-neighbourly relations or sanctions by Moscow,and to keep the poUce at bay. The Soviet ambassador to Switzerland,Gerasimov, and the Soviet ambassadress to the United Nations in Geneva,Mironova, were also at their posts, ready for action. They were also part of thesupport force. They didn't know what was going on, but they had receivedcoded instructions from the Central Committee to be ready at any moment tothreaten, intimidate, exert pressure and keep the authorities away. Thediplomatic couriers were also at the ready. There might be an urgent packagefor Moscow. Aeroflot was also ready for action, ready to fly home immediately

anyone who had been arrested the minute he was released, so that there wouldbe less fuss, and so as not to give the journaHsts anything to work on. Toprevent it blowing up into a major scandal, to make

sure everything stayedquiet and peaceful.

There were many entrances, with a queue at each. That was a good thing: wewere less noticeable in a crowd. Seven francs to enter. Three tickets, please.Twenty-one francs. Excellent. A good number. Everyone in intelUgence wasas superstitious as an old maid. There was only one briefcase in our group, fordemonstration purposes. Check it if you wish - just papers, nothing more. Putit through the X-ray machine or though the magnetic gate: nothing but paper.

My colleagues were in a hurry to reach their stands. To hell with them! I wasmy own boss now. I had got to recruit somebody and work with him, so I didn'twant to rush. We talked with one old chap and drank coffee with him. Westopped in other places, sitting down, chatting with representatives, noddingour heads, admiring the wares.

The bigger firms had the more important goods to display. We stopped off atthem too, looked enviously at the grey boxes and moved on. A lot of people hadgathered round the big stands. The firms' experts were providing expla-nations, and the firms' security men were obviously in attendance. On wewent, until we reached a stand on which a man of medium height was sittingalone near some grey boxes and looking very bored. He was on his own - hiswas obviously a small firm. He was probably the owner or the manager of thefirm, and he was his own security officer.

*Good morning.'

*Good morning.'

'Your little boxes are of great interest to us. Fantastic product.'

My colleagues pretended that they did not speak anything but Russian, sothat I had to act as interpreter. This was a good device, because it gave themmuch more time to think up their replies. Apart from that, it also pushed meslightly into the background.

They talked about all sorts of technical stuff and quoted strings of figures,which sent my head spinning. Meanwhile my colleagues kept hopping aboutand just could not sit still.

*How much are you asking for one box?'

'5,500 dollars.'

We all burst out laughing. I immediately opened the briefcase (there

beingno one behind me) and the false bottom, so that he could feast his eyes on thegreen notes. I shut it at once, but he continued to stare with fascination at thecase.

Tor that one box we are ready to hand over to you now no less than 120,000dollars. The trouble is, however, that we are from the Soviet Union, and yourgovernments in the West place such terrible restrictions on freedom of tradethat we cannot, unfortunately, buy your box. What a pity!'

We got up and left the stand. Thirty metres away we turned a corner and gotlost in the crowd.

'What about it? Is it a real box or just a model?'

'No, it's a real one. Go and hook him!'

Our technical experts went along with me to have further conversation andalso to have another look at the instrument before we bought it. I could easilybe tricked, but not they. I returned to the stand, briefcase in hand. Herecognised me and smiled. I walked past and also smiled. Then, suddenly, as ifI had just hit on an idea, I turned to him and asked him if he would like to meetme for a drink that evening.

The smile faded from his face. He gave me a long, cold look in the eyes.Then he looked at the briefcase. Then again at me and nodded his head. Ihanded him a card on which was the address of the Hotel du Lac in Montreuxand on which I had already written the time —'21:00'. That was so as not tospend time explaining things to him.

As I left the stand I was walking on air. A recruitment! He had agreed. Hewas already my secret agent. I had to be careful not to leap for joy. If only Icould wipe the smile of exultation from my face. If only my heart wouldn't beatso fast. I caught up my colleagues and told them I had carried out therecruitment.

We walked round a few more stands, chatting, admiring and nodding ourheads. We had some coffee. Ought we not to display our briefcase once again?Shouldn't we try to recruit someone else? My eyes lit up: two recruit-ments No, we would not recruit a second one. Greed was the priest's

undoing.

The Plain de Plainpalais was packed with cars from end to end and it wasdifficult to find our own. The Consul-general's car was there and he was inside,which meant that he had not been needed. All was going well and dozens ofinvaluable recruitments had been carried out without anything going wrong. Icould see also a huge coach among dozens of other similar coaches, where theNavigator was receiving the most successful of his pupils. But I had not yetreached the stage of enjoying such an honour as to report the results of my workpersonally to the Navigator. I was responsible to his First Deputy. Wherecould he be? After walking through endless rows of cars I found him in ourbus.

It was already full. The front seats were all occupied by officers of the GRUInformation Service and the Military-Industrial Committee. They had beenhelping us to recruit. The back seats were empty. The curtains had been pulleddown, as though to protect us from the sun. There on the back seat was theFirst Deputy. He called us in one at a time and we reported to him in whispers.

We, Borzois and Vikings, were all crowding together in the aisle. Appar-ently without purpose. There was noise and pushing and joking. But it was aqueue. We were all impatient, our eyes gleaming. And much laughter.

The First Deputy nodded to me. It was my turn.

'Recruited one. In six minutes forty seconds. First meeting with him thisevening.'

'Good man. Congratulations. Next '

I had recruited a valuable agent, one who for decades ahead would beproviding us with the very latest electronic equipment for aircraft, for artillery,for mihtary hehcopters and for missile guidance systems. Neither I nor theFirst Deputy had the slightest doubt that he had really been recruited.

It was true that so far the GRU knew about the new secret agent only whatwas written on his visiting card, and no more. More was known about hisapparatus: we had two small cuttings from newspapers about the apparatusRS-77. But that did not matter. More important was the fact that we needed hisapparatus and that we were going to get it. We would soon get to know moreabout our secret agent. Most important was that he was ready to collaboratesecretly with us.

In less than seven minutes with him I had got across to him a lot of importantfacts. I had used the most ordinary sentences, but from them it was clear that:

—we were official representatives of the Soviet Union;

—we were interested in the most up-to-date military electronics, and in hisapparatus in particular;

—we were ready to pay well for them and he now knew exactly the pricewe'd pay;

—we worked under cover, skilfully and cautiously, without putting onpressure or making demands;

—we did not need many samples of an instrument but just one for copying.

From all of which he could himself conclude that:

—we were not competitors for his firm;

—if the production of such an instrument were organised in the USSR hewould lose nothing by it, but would only gain, because the demand for hisapparatus would grow and armies in the West might even order somethingeven more expensive, something even more highly advanced;

—having sold us only one sample of the apparatus, he could easily concealthe fact from the authorities and the police: it was not like selling a hundred or athousand;

—finally, our proposals were perfectly clear to him; he knew what we wantedand so he was not afraid of us; he reahsed that the sale of the apparatus could betreated as industrial espionage for which the penalties in the West were forsome reason lighter.

All aspects of the deal were clear to him. In a single proposition I hadinformed him of our interest, conditions and what we would pay. So that,when he nodded his head agreeing to meet me, he was quite definitely saying'yes' to Soviet military inteUigence. He understood that we were engaged in aforbidden activity and had agreed to have contact with us. That meant

My brief recruiting talk with the man was roughly the same as telling a prettyyoung student that I was a rich debauchee ready to pay an attractive girlgenerously for sexual intercourse. Letting her see the money and naming aprice, and then proposing to meet somewhere on our own and Usten to music.If she agreed, what more was there to discuss? What else was there to talkabout?

That is exactly the way the quick large-scale recruitments are carried out atexhibitions: We're interested. We're ready to pay. Where shall we meet?

On the other hand, even if the whole of my conversation with the man hadbeen recorded on tape, there was absolutely nothing in it of a criminal nature.We had looked at his instrument, said we'd like to buy it, but that it was notpermitted. Only later did I return and propose going for a drink in the evening.

I was young and inexperienced. I could be forgiven for taking seven minutesover a recruitment. A so-called 'instantaneous' recruitment ought to take onlyan instant. Just a dozen words. Just a proposition and a nice smile.

A recruitment should ideally be immediately and thoroughly concealed. Iought to have gone round a hundred stands saying roughly the same every-where and smiling in the same way, though not recruiting. Then, if I werefollowed how could anyone know which of the hundred had said 'yes' to Sovietmihtary intelligence? There were a lot of us at the exhibition. A lot activelyrecruiting and a lot backing them up. Every one of us covered up his recruitingby having hundreds of other meetings. There were thousands of people at theexhibition. A vast stream, a whirlpool, Shanghai. Just try to follow anyonethere

A new agent has to be got as quickly as possible a long way from theexhibition. That same night my more experienced comrades were havingmeetings with freshly recruited agents in France, Italy, West Germany. I wasmeeting my man in Montreux. Others were having secret meetings in Basel,Zurich, Lucerne. As far as possible from Geneva, the further the better. Thosewere only the first meetings. Second meetings would take place in Austria, inFinland, in the United States of America. As far as possible from Switzerland!The further away the better.

I spent a long time covering up my tracks. I was being well taken care of by theothers. If I had been followed I had thrown them off long

ago. I had vanishedinto thin air. I no longer existed. I had got lost in huge department stores. I haddisappeared in vast underground garages. I had squeezed out of an over-crowded lift.

I had been transported from Geneva to Lausanne in the boot of a car with adiplomatic plate. That was the first security move, the work of the Vikings

from the GRU's diplomatic residency in Geneva. They had not seen me andknew nothing about me. They had left their car in an underground garage at anagreed time and had gone away, leaving the boot unlocked. Such were theirinstructions. They had probably guessed that their work was connected insome way with the exhibition. But how exactly? They did not have the right tolook into the car's boot. They had driven at top speed down the autoroute,having spent not less than four hours making sure they were not beingfollowed. They checked again before driving into an underground garage inLausanne. A dark place with a lot of floors, stairways and exits. Were theybeing followed? They walked around the town to make sure, then back to thegarage. Off they went: more stops and more garages. They didn't knowwhether there was anything in the boot or not. Of course there was nothing in itnow. I had caught a train long ago and was on my way, an unnoticed passengerin a second-class compartment. Then I suddenly jumped out and changedtrains. Then I disappeared in underground passageways, in crowds, in thebasements of bars and in dark side-streets. It was a new country for me, but Iknew it all by heart. Someone had carefully prepared the dark passages for me,spending months finding them and describing them to me. Someone else haddone the dull job as a Borzoi, covering my recruitment operation.

There were only four possibilities which might lead to failure:

—if I was being followed;

—if all the people I had met that day were now under observation;

—if my new friend was a police provocateur, or if he had taken fright,reported me to the police and thereby became a provocateur;

—if somebody at our meeting place had recognised us quite by chance andreported what he had seen to the police.

I dismissed three of these possibilities. First of all, I was not being

followed.Secondly, I had met around a hundred people that day. It would have beenimpossible to keep all of them under observation. Thirdly, the Borzois of theGeneva GRU had picked a pretty good place for the meeting. The likelihoodthat I might run into somebody I knew was practically nil. There remainedonly my new friend. But it would not be difficult to check up on him. Later thatnight the GRU experts would check the apparatus, and if it worked it wouldmean that our friend was not connected with the police. The police would notbe likely to pay so highly in terms of secrets to receive nothing in return.

The meeting place chosen for me was really not bad. It had been discoveredby some nameless Borzoi, who had then described it and pointed out itsadvantages. If I had not liked the place I could have complained to the FirstDeputy the next day, so that the head of the GRU would have known about it aday later and he would have torn a strip off the resident in Geneva. But I wasnot going to complain. I liked the place. It had to be in a big hotel, where no onepaid any attention to anyone else. It had got to be a good hotel, but not the best.

And that was what it was. But most important was that I should have a wellprotected observation point to be able to keep an eye on everything that wasgoing on for at least an hour before our meeting was due to begin. There wassuch a point. If my friend had reported our meeting and if the poHce wereplanning to watch us, then it was likely that there would be some suspiciousthings happening around the meeting place.

I waited an hour, but nothing suspicious took place. At 20:54 he appeared.He was alone in a yellow Audi 100. I memorised the number of his car, animportant detail. Nobody drove up behind him. He entered the restaurant,glancing round in all directions. That was a very good sign. If he had beenunder police protection he wouldn't have looked around. To look around likethat is very unprofessional (though I shall not tell him so). There would beother meetings and he would always be under observation by one of us. So lethim look round. It set our minds at rest.

At 21:03 I left my observation point and entered the restaurant.

We smiled at each other. The most important thing then was to reassurehim, to show him all my cards, or at least give the impression that all my cardswere on the table. A man is scared only of the

unknown. When the situation isclear he has nothing to fear. And if he is not afraid, then he doesn't do stupidthings.

'I don't intend to involve you in any dubious business.' In this situation youalways say T and not *We'. I spoke in my own name and not on behalf of anyorganisation. I don't know why, but it has a much better effect on recruitedagents. Apparently the words *we' and 'organisation' frighten a person. Hewanted to believe that only he and one other person in the whole world knowabout his treachery. Of course this is impossible. Behind me stood anextremely powerful organisation. But I was forbidden to say 'we'. I had beenpunished for it at the Military-Diplomatic Academy.

*I am ready to pay you for your instrument. / need it. But I shan't force you.'

'What makes you think that I have come to work for you?'

'That's the way it looks to me. Why not? You have complete security. Andtop prices.'

'Are you really ready to pay 120,000 dollars?'

*Yes—60,000 immediately. So that you won't need to worry about myintentions. Another 60,000 as soon as I have been able to check that theinstrument really works.'

'How soon will you be able to convince yourselP'

'In two days' time.'

'What guarantee have I that you'll return with the second half of the money?'

'You are a very valuable person for me. I reckon to get from you more thanthis one instrument. What would be the point of my deceiving you at our firstmeeting?'

He looked at me with a fleeting smile on his face. He knew I was right. And Ilooked at my first agent recruited abroad. He was ready to sell his beautifulcountry's security for thirty pieces of silver. I didn't like that at all. I was

working in this field because I had no choice. It was fate. If not here,

then insome other place where the Soviet system would have found me some equallydisagreeable work. And if I had refused, the system would simply havedevoured me. I was not a free man. But this fellow was rushing, of his own freewill, to help us. If he had come up against me when I was in Spetsnaz I wouldhave made such a Judas suffer. Then I remembered that I was supposed tosmile at agents. So I smiled.

Tou are not from Europe?'

*No.'

*I think we ought not to meet in your country, nor in Switzerland. What doyou say to Austria?'

'An excellent idea.'

'I'll meet you in two days in Austria. Look at this.' I handed him a card withan address and picture of an hotel. 'I'll pay all your expenses. Including thenight club.'

He smiled. But I wasn't sure what the smile meant: was he pleased or not? Ican interpret the meaning of dozens of different smiles. But there in the dark Iwasn't sure.

'Do you have the instrument with you?'

'Yes, in the boot of the car.'

'Drive into the woods behind me and I'll take it off you there.'

'You're not going to murder me?'

'Be sensible. I need the instrument. But what use is your life to me? I needyou ahve. I don't intend to stop at the first piece of equipment. Why should Ikill you? I'm ready to pay you a million. All you have to do is let me have thegoods.'

'If you are ready to pay so much, it means that your armaments industry issaving money by buying it. Yes?'

'You're dead right.'

'You pay 120,000 for the first instrument and save yourself millions.'

'Correct.'

'In the future you will pay me a million, but you'll save yourselves a

hundredmillions. Two hundred. Three hundred.'

'That's right.'

'But that's exploitation! I don't want to work on that basis. I won't sell youthe instrument for 120,000.'

'Then go and sell it in the West for 5,500. If anyone will buy it from you. Ifyou can find someone who will pay you more than I will, it's your affair. I'm notforcing you to sell to me. I can buy the same instrument in Belgium or theUnited States.'

That was only bluff. We couldn't make an approach to a big firm. We'd getour noses broken. I had no other access to instruments for receiving reflectedlaser beams. But I smiled cheerfully. Don't, if you don't want to. But he had nomonopoly. I could buy elsewhere.

'The bill, please!'

He looked me in the eyes. For a long time. Then he smiled. Light was nowshining on his face and for that reason I was sure that his smile concealednothing bad. Again I smiled back.

He lifted a package out of the boot of his car and offered it to me.

'No, no.' I waved my hands. 'Better for me not to touch it. Take it to my car.If anything went wrong you could say you accidendy left the package in mycar. Nothing to do with espionage. Just forgetfulness.'

He got into my car. (Of course it was not my own, but a hired car.)

The doors were locked from inside. That was the instruction. The apparatuswas under the seat. I unbuttoned my waistcoat. It was a special garment fortransporting money. I placed six tighdy bound bundles in his hands.

'Check them.'

'Why should I check the money? I have trusted you with my life, in the beliefthat you won't betray me as a spy. So I'm bound to trust you over money.'

'If in two days' time you can produce the technical documentation, I will payyou the remaining 60,000, plus another 120,000 for the documents.'

He nodded his head.

I shook him by the hand.

He went to his car. I departed at speed into the darkness.

How many GRU officers were there taking care of me? I didn't know exacdy.But I had two more appointments to keep that night. First of all the instrumentI had obtained had to be got inside the walls of the Soviet embassy as quickly aspossible. Secondly, I had to hand over the hired car and pick up my owndiplomatic one.

Half an hour later, on a mountain road in the dark and fog, I met up with thesecond secretary from the Soviet embassy in Berne. He had a white Peugeot504 which was hardly visible in the thick curUng clouds of fog.

My goods were already packed in a tough green tarpaulin sack, closed upand doubly sealed. My contact was a diplomat and a colonel in the GRU, but hewas not entitled to know who I was or what was in the sack. His orders were tomeet me, take over the sack, lock the doors of his car on the inside and drivestraight to the embassy. From the moment when the sack landed in thediplomatic car it was in relative safety. Once it was inside the stone walls of theembassy it would be absolutely safe.

I drew my car up close to his, side by side and dropped the window. His wasalready down. I handed the sack over.

He was a tall fair-haired fellow, with a serious face. By the determined foldsat his mouth I felt sure that he was a successful recruiter. A Viking, withoutany doubt. Stubborn chaps like that didn't stay long doing back-up. But that

was a mad day. Everyone in the Geneva and Berne residencies had been puton to back-up-work.

We were not allowed to speak, and certainly not in Russian. The orderswere to stop, hand over the sack and disappear. In that brief moment he hadtime to look me over. By some faint signs he recognised in me a long-standing Borzoi, fed up with the work of covering other people's activities,who had for the first time met with success. He smiled at me, and saidnothing, only slightly moving his lips. I grasped what he was saying: goodluck.

Then there was nothing but the red tail-lights of his car in the white fogand the memory of his smile in the window of the car. And he had vanished.

I waited for three minutes. He had made his getaway by now. He had thegoods. In two hours I would have another meeting near Interlaken, to handover the hired car.

That night I might have been in Fribourg and in Neuchatel. I met the dawnin Zurich. Most important now was to have as many contacts with people aspossible. I could have been seen in a large Hbrary, in a shop selling guns, ina bar or at a railway station. I talked with lots of men and women. I askedthe way to a firm which really existed but which I had no need of at all. Iwent through address books and sought out people who were really of nointerest to us. They say that foxes also cover their tracks in exactly the sameway.

I crossed the frontier at Bregenz late in the evening. There was no Swisspolice control there, but even if there had been it was not permitted foranyone to inspect a diplomatic car. And if, in contravention of the ViennaConvention of 1815, they had used force to examine my luggage, they wouldhave found nothing there. What might have interested them was already inMoscow in a huge building in the Khodinka, called the Aquarium. While Ihad been covering my tracks a special plane with armed diplomatic messen-gers had already dehvered dozens of sealed green sacks carefully stacked inaluminium containers.

The Austrian poHce greeted me with a smile. With a quick glance at mydocuments they waved me through, showing no interest in my car or its con-tents. A rather plump fellow with a gun in a holster saluted.

Why should they make themselves a nuisance to a Soviet diplomat withsuch an open, kindly face? Did he really look Hke one of those long-hairedterrorists whose pictures were posted up in the police office?

I drove slowly across the frontier, saluting them as I went. I was noenemy of theirs; I was almost a friend. We had carried out a large-scalerecruitment drive, but there was not a single Swiss or Austrian citizenamong our new agents. We recruited those in other places. My colleagueswere operating against Austria inside all the other countries of the world.

But we try not to abuse hospitality. Of course Austrians are recruited frominside Austria, but you try not to.

*Well now, turn round, lad! What a sight you are!' That was how the FirstDeputy greeted me. 'Just take a look at yourself.'

I looked in the mirror and saw looking at me a man with an ashen grey faceand a growth of dirty beard. His eyes were bloodshot and sunken. He wasmighty tired.

'Go down and have a sauna. And a shave. Then come back upstairs. TheNavigator's waiting for you.'

'Why?'

'Don't worry: it's not because you're in trouble.'

There were three of my friends in the same sauna: identified by the numbers4, 20 and 32.

'Greetings, brothers.'

*Hello, Viking.'

They had obviously been in the sauna for a long time. They were red fromthe heat.

'Why don't you sit down, Viktor? And they all laughed. They knew that Icouldn't sit after two whole days at the wheel. They were not sitting them-selves, but lying on their stomachs.

'Want some beer, Viktor?'

'Sure thing.'

Kolya was beating my back and backside with birch branches.

'Is that getting the circulation going again?'

'It certainly is.'

'But Viktor, don't go to sleep, it's dangerous. Better have some more beer.'

The table in the big hall was laid with good things as if for a party. There wereno chairs. No one would be sitting down now. We smiled at each other butremained silent. Then the Navigator appeared, with

the first cipher clerkbehind him like a sword-bearer.

'I don't propose to discuss the details of the operation just concluded. Buteverybody achieved some success. Some made three recruitments. Severalmade two.'

The Navigator turned to the cipher clerk: 'Alexander Ivanovich, read out tothe staff those parts of the message which concern them.'

Alexander Ivanovich opened a green file cover and read out in a solemnvoice:

'To the commander of the diplomatic residency 173-V, Major-generalGohtsyn. Eight diplomatic mail containers despatched by you from Vienna,

Berne and Paris have been received. Preliminary analysis carried out by the 9thdirectorate of the Information Service is positive. This enables us to make apreliminary judgment concerning the reliability of all the people drawn intocollaboration with us. Head of 1st directorate of the GRU, Vice-admiralYefremov. Head of the 5th Department of the 1st directorate of the GRUMajor-general Lyashko.'

We all smiled.

'Read on.' The Navigator was also smiling.

The operation you have carried out was one of the most successfulrecruitment drives of recent months. I congratulate you and the whole staff ofthe residency on their notable achievements. Deputy Chief of General Staff,Head of Second Main Directorate, Army General Ivashutin.'

'Champagne!'

The corks went off like guns. The golden hquid sparkled and bubbled in theglasses. The bottles were ice-cold, the buckets of ice were silver. How tired Iwas. How I wanted to drink - and to sleep.

One after the other we presented ourselves to the Navigator to exchangecongratulations. I went up in turn.

'Comrade general, congratulations. The Japanese have got a lot and so havethe Americans, but from today we have everything.'

He smiled.

'Not everything, but access to everything. Why didn't you go for a secondrecruitment?'

'I don't know, comrade general. I was afraid of spoiling things.'

'You did right. The two most dangerous things in our work are mutualsuspicion and excessive enthusiasm. One recruitment is also a great deal.Congratulations.'

'Thank you, comrade general.'

'Alexander Ivanovich Read out the last message.'

The cipher clerk opened his file again:

'To Major-general Golitsyn. Thank you for your work. Kulikov, ArmyGeneral, Chief of General Staff.'

'Hurrah!' we shouted.

The Navigator again looked serious. Solemnly he raised his glass.

The third cipher clerk woke me up four and a half hours after my head hit thepillow. There were eighteen folding beds in the rest room. Some of them werealready empty. In the others my comrades were sleeping - those who wereengaged on the second operation that day.

'Did I do right to wake you, Viktor Andreyevich?' The cipher clerk studiedhis hst.

I glanced at my watch and nodded.

Breakfast was being served in the big hall where the smell of champagne still

hung in the air. But I didn't feel like eating. My head was going round. I mademyself drink a glass of cold juice and eat a sUce of bacon. The cipher clerkannounced from the doorway:

The First Deputy is waiting for you. You may take your coffee with you.'

The First Deputy's eyes were red from lack of sleep. He had probably

notbeen to bed all night

'Be more careful with the money waistcoat. The car door must be lockedfrom the inside all the time. In case of trouble call for the Soviet consul. Duringthe night your car has been washed, checked over, adjusted, filled with petroland the kilometrometer turned back. The route and the signs for aborting theoperation to be agreed with the control group. That's all. Good luck. Nextone!'

I returned a couple of days later. The new agent, who was already known at173-V-41-706, brought to our meeting the complete technical specification ofthe RS-77 instrument. He gave me a fist of civil and military officials who dealtwith his firm and who might be recruited later. Against each one of them weresome brief notes, with a photograph, his address and, most important, a Hst ofhis more obvious weaknesses. I paid him 180,000 dollars. And I fixed anothermeeting. The information that he supphed on his own initiative would be paidfor next time.

Eight days later I was promoted to the rank of major in the General Staff.

For some reason I felt very depressed. It was the first time that I did not feelhappy on such an occasion. When my commander read out the message to me Iduly called out: 'I serve the Soviet Union', but I thought to myself: They treatme as we treated my agent. He receives a hundred thousand, and the people atthe top save milhons. I am responsible for making the saving possible and all Iget is a little aluminium star as a reward. And I don't even have the right towear it, because my uniform is hanging in the cupboard in mothballs.

I was sad. I got no great pleasure from rank or decorations. There wassomething worrying me, but I didn't know what it was. Most important was tomake sure that no one else noticed my mood. If the optimism were to fade inmy eyes it would be noticed and steps would be taken. I didn't know what kindof steps, but they would be taken. And that would be no good at all.

I looked the general straight in the eyes and smiled joyfully and happily.

Chapter Ten

When I'm in bed I always cover myself up, head and all, wrapping the

blanketround me like a fur coat. It is an old Army habit, an unconscious reflex. It's anattempt to preserve the warmth right through to the morning. I no longer sleepin cold tents, in wet trenches or in icy autumn forests. But the habit of sleepingbeneath the covers is with me for life.

Recently the blanket had begun to frighten me. If I woke up suddenly atnight in the pitch darkness I would ask myself, scared out of my wits, whether Iwasn't in a coffin. I would carefully probe the blanket with my nose. Not verymuch like a coffin. But maybe I was wrapped in a sheet and the lid of the coffinwas higher? Slowly I would feel the air above me. No, I was not yet in mycoffin.

This is probably the way people start to go mad, how madness creeps up onthem. But perhaps I had long been a schizophrenic, only the people around mehadn't twigged it? It could well be. Being mad was by no means as bad as itmight appear. If tomorrow they wrapped me in white sheets and took me off tothe lunatic asylum I wouldn't resist or even be surprised. It was the place forme. I was certainly not normal. But who of the people around me was normal,either? I seemed to be Hving in a madhouse. Total madness. Why on earth didthe West admit us in our hundreds and thousands? We were spies. Didn't theyrealise that I had been sent there in order to cause them untold harm? Whydidn't they arrest me and throw me out? Why did these strange incomprehen-sible people in the West never protest? How had they developed suchslave-like docility? Perhaps they had all gone out of their minds? Perhaps wewere all madmen? I was sure I was. It was no accident that I imagined myself ina coffin. It had started eighteen months ago, after my meeting with Kir.

Do you know Kir? Everybody knows Kir. Kir is a very important figure.Kir Lemzenko had been stationed in Rome, though his work was not, ofcourse, only in Italy. Kir had had success everywhere. As the GRU's under-cover resident in Rome, Kir Gavrilovich Lemzenko had wielded enormouspower. That's why he had been called the Pope of Rome. He was now aColonel-general. He was in the Administrative department of the CentralCommittee of the Party, and in the name of the Party he supervised the GRUand the KGB.

A year and a half previously, when I was being screened for travel abroad, Ihad been sunwnoned to Kir's presence for a five-minute talk. He always saw allthe GRU and KGB officers who were due to be posted abroad. It was Kir who

confirmed their appointments or rejected them. He was very powerful, andeverybody knew it. The fate of every officer of the GRU and the KGB was inhis hands.

Staraya Square in Moscow, with the monument to the grenadiers. Uniformed police and plain-clothes men standing in groups in their grey raincoats,eyeing everybody seriously. Entrance No. 6. Show your Party card. A guardwith blue epaulettes read out my name - 'Suvorov'. 'Victor Andreyevich,'another called out when he had found my name on a short Hst. 'Yes,' said thefirst guard. 'This way.' A third guard accompanied me along the corridor.'This way please, Viktor Andreyevich.' The guard was not supposed to knowwho Viktor Andreyevich Suvorov was. He knew only that this Suvorov hadbeen summoned to the Central Committee for a meeting and that it would takeplace on the seventh floor, in room 788. The guard was very poHte. 'This way,please.'

So these were the corridors of power. Vaulted ceilings beneath which Stalinand Khrushchev had walked and beneath which Brezhnev still walked. TheCentral Committee headquarters is a whole town, a state in itself in the centreof Moscow, like the Vatican in Rome.

There is always building going on at the Central Committee. There aredozens of buildings, all linked together and all the free courtyards andpassageways are being built over and new white glass skyscrapers are going up.It is strange, but those snow-white buildings can hardly be seen from StarayeSquare. Or, rather, they can be seen, but they do not stand out. Staraye Squareis overlooked by the huge windows of the grey pre-revolutionary buildingsnow joined together into a single unit. Inside the Central Committee's quarterit is not so stern and gloomy. All sorts of architectural styles are mixed upthere.

'This way, please.' Dazzling cleanliness. Red carpets. Door-handles ofpolished brass. I scarcely dared to touch them for fear of leaving a mark. Thelifts worked silently.

'Wait here.' I was standing in front of a huge window out of which I could seethe narrow back-streets of the Zamoskvorechye district, the golden domes ofthe churches that had been destroyed by the Revolution and restored for thebenefit of foreign tourists, and the enormous building of the Military Engi-neering Academy. Outside the sun shone brightly and the pigeons had settledon the ledges of the tall buildings. Kir was ready for me.

'Come this way, please.' His office was vast, with one wall entirely of

glasslooking out over a huddle of green roofs belonging to the Central Committeebuildings. The other walls were fight grey in colour and there was a soft greywoollen carpet on the floor. There was one huge desk without a single scrap ofpaper on it, a big safe, and nothing else.

'Good morning, Viktor Andreyevich,' a kindly voice said.

'Good morning, Kir Gavrilovich.'

He didn't like being called 'general'. Or perhaps he liked it but didn't showit. In any case the orders were to say 'Kir Gavrilovich' and not 'comrade

general'. An odd name. According to his surname he is Ukrainian, but his firstname recalled an Assyrian warrior. How could they keep a man with suchnames in the Central Committee? But perhaps it was not an anti-Soviet namebut, on the contrary, a very Soviet one. Following the Revolution the orthodoxMarxists invented all sorts of names for their children: *Vladlen' came fromVladimir Lenin; *Iskra' was the name of a Bolshevik newspaper; *Kim' wasmade from the initials of the Communist Youth International. Maybe 'Kir'had the same origins - the Conmiunist International, perhaps.

*Sit down, Viktor Andreyevich. How are you?'

'Very well, thank you, Kir Gavrilovich.'

He was quite small in stature, with only the first signs of grey hair, andnothing remarkable at all about his face. If you met him on the street youwouldn't even turn to look at him, or be struck by his appearance. He waswearing the most ordinary of suits, grey with a stripe, but beautifully tailoredof course. That was all. He looked altogether like a very average man. But thiswas the great Kir!

I had expected to hear pompous phrases from him: The head of the GRUand the Central Committee have placed tremendous trust in you ...' and soforth. But there were none of those phrases about the front-line struggle withcapitalism, the duties of a Soviet intelligence office, the all-conquering ideas ofCommunism. He simply looked me in the face, like a doctor, silently andattentively.

Tou are aware, Viktor Andreyevich, that in the GRU and the KGB we veryseldom have people who flee to the West.'

I nodded.

'AH those who have done so are unhappy. That is not just propaganda.Sixty-five per cent of defectors from the GRU and KGB return in the end andadmit their guilt. We execute them. They know that and they still return.Those who do not return to the Soviet Union of their own free will finish up bycommitting suicide, drinking themselves to death or just going to the dogs.Why?'

'Because they have betrayed their socialist motherland. They have badconsciences. They have lost all their friends, family, language...!'

'That is not the most important, Viktor Andreyevich. There are moreserious reasons. Here in the Soviet Union you are one of us, a member of theupper class. Every one of us, even the least important officer of the GRU, is asuperman by comparison with all the rest. So long as you are part of our systemyou enjoy colossal privileges compared with the rest of the population of thecountry. When you have your youth and your health, your power andprivileges, you forget about it all. And you recall it only when it is too late.Some of us flee to the West in the hope of having a magnificent car, a mansionwith a swimming pool and a lot of money. And the West really does pay well.But once he's got his Mercedes and his own swimming pool, the traitorsuddenly realises that all the people around him also have nice cars and pools.He suddenly feels like an ant in a crowd of equally rich ants. He loses the sense

of superiority over those around him. He becomes an ordinary person, like therest. Even if the enemy intelhgence service gives that traitor a job he will stillnot recover his feeling of superiority over others, because to work in intelh-gence in the West is not regarded as a great honour and is not highly esteemed.You're just a civil servant, a httle insect, that's all.'

'I had never thought of it that way.'

*Well, think about it, and keep thinking about it. Wealth is relative. InMoscow if you drive around in a Lada you have all the pretty girls looking atyou. But if you drive round Paris in a Citroen, however big it is, nobody looksat you. It's all relative. In our Far Eastern districts a colonel is God and Tsar,master of all, a very despot. But in Moscow a colonel is just a pawn, becausethere are thousands of other colonels around. If you betray your country youlose everything. And you will

remember that you once belonged to a powerfulorganisation and were a very special person, set apart from milhons of others.Betray your country, and you will find yourself as insignificant and unimpor-tant as the rest of the population. Capitalism provides money, but it does notprovide power or respect. There are also among us some especially smart guyswho do not defect to the West but remain among us, secretly selling oursecrets. They receive money from the capitalists and still enjoy the status of asuperman provided by socialism. But we quickly run them down and destroythem '

*I know. Penkovsky '

*Not only him. Penkovsky is known everywhere. But there were many whoare not known. A man called Konstantinov, for example. He returned toMoscow on leave and was immediately put under investigation. The evidenceagainst him was incontrovertible. He was sentenced to death.'

'He was put in the furnace too?'

*No. He begged not to be executed.'

*And he wasn't executed?'

*No, he was not killed. But one day he fell asleep in his cell and woke up in acoffin. Deep in the ground. He begged not to be executed, so we didn't executehim. But the coffin had to be put into the grave. Those are the instructions. Offyou go, Viktor Audreyevich. Good luck. And remember that the level ofbetrayal in the GRU is much lower than in the KGB. Try to maintain that goodtradition.'

In Munich it was snowing. There was a violet-tinted sky, and an enormousgrey cloud enveloping the whole city showered snowflakes on it. The peoplescurried along, their noses buried in the collars of their coats. There were firtrees everywhere, and around the street lamps the snowflakes seemed denserand bigger. The falling snow deadened the noises of our cruel century and hidthe dirt and dreariness of civilisation. Everything was clean, without dirtypatches, even the roof of the Deutsche Bank. Everything is so quiet and warm

when snow falls. If you really strained you could hear the faint noise of thesnowflakes as they fell. Just listen to that snow falling! Where were the peoplehurrying to? When you stopped it was so clean and quiet. No driving wind, nosqueal of brakes. Just peace and quiet over

the white city. Why did they allrush to hide themselves away in the stuffy bars, in that poisonous air and clatterand noise?

Snowflakes were falling on my face. I liked it and did not hide my face. Snowcan be sharp and painful, but not that day. It was a pleasant snow falling fromthe sky, so I made no attempt to turn my face away.

From the railway station I made for the Marienplatz and the centre. I wascovering my tracks. I wasn't being followed, but I had to take precautions andweave about a bit. I couldn't have had better weather for it. There was nobodyon the deserted streets of Munich. The people had gone to earth. I was alone inthe city. Major in the GRU, 173-V-4I. I was covering up my tracks after ameeting with my friend No. 173-V-4I-706.1 had had the meeting in Hamburg,where some young Borzoi from the diplomatic residency in Bonn had takenover the documents I had obtained.

In Munich I was simply covering my tracks, dodging round the side-streetsin the snow and mist. Sometimes I let myself be seen where there were a lot ofpeople - once in the endless labyrinths of the beer hall where Hitler's party wasfounded. It was scarcely a bar; it was a whole town with streets and squares,and endless rows of seats and thousands of people. It was one great indepen-dent beer state, like the Vatican in Rome or the Central Committee in Moscow.On I went down the rows of chairs, round one corner and then another, until Ifound a dark corner where I could rest for a while. Who might turn up behindme? In that dark corner, in that huge oak seat, Goering might well have sat.Now I was sitting there with a huge mug of beer. That was my work: to studythe passers-by, to see who might have followed me. Was there somebodyseeking me with his eyes, somebody who had lost sight of me in that whirlpool,in the gloom, in the haze of the beer-hall? There seemed to be nobody. So Iwent outside again, into the narrow side-streets and the blue bUzzard.

Comrade Shelepin was in Vienna. In transit. He was on his way to Geneva for ameeting of the International Labour Office. Comrade Shelepin was the head ofthe Soviet trade union movement. He was also a member of the PoHtburo.Comrade Shelepin was a star of the first magnitude. Not a rising star, however,but a falling one. There had been a time when comrade Shelepin had been,unofficially, deputy chairman of the KGB and at the same time vice-presidentof the World Federation of Democratic Youth. Comrade Shelepin hadorganised demonstrations for peace and friendship between the peoples. Hehad been responsible for mighty demonstrations in defence of peace.

Millionsof stupid people had responded to comrade Shelepin's appeals. They hadshouted and demanded peace, disarmament and justice. For that he had been

elevated to the rank of chairman of the KGB. He ruled with a strict, firm hand.He ruled half the world, including the democratic youth who were demandingpeace. But he had overdone it. Now all he ruled were the Soviet trades unions.In the Soviet Union trades unions are also KGB, but only a branch. Conse-quently the embassy was not showing any special respect for its high-rankingguest. Let him carry on to Geneva and not hang about in Vienna. It was quiteclear to everybody that comrade Shelepin was shpping downhill. He had beenchairman of the KGB, but now he was only boss of the trades unions. Once theslide downwards had begun there was no stopping it.

Everybody in the embassy knew that comrade Shelepin was in the habit ofdrinking himself into a state of complete madness. The leader of the Sovietproletariat would use the most frightful language. He had attacked thehousemaid in his bedroom. He had thrown a heavy crystal ash-tray out of thewindow and damaged the Cuban ambassador's limousine. He knew himselfthat his end had come. The former head of the KGB was taking his leave ofpower.

I ran into him in a corridor. His face looked swollen and lined, not at all likethe one that smiled at us from his official portraits. In fact I recognised himonly by the fact that he was drunk - nobody else would have dared to go aroundthe embassy in that state - and by the size of his bodyguard. Who else wouldhave five men to accompany him? The bodyguards had expressionless faces, asthey were expected to. They moved with self-assurance, village lads raised tothe summit of power. They did not, of course, understand that once the fallhad begun there was no stopping it.

It was only on the lips of the man in charge of the group of bodyguards that Icaught sight of a slightly contemptuous smile. I knew exactly what that smirkmeant. He was not there to protect comrade Shelepin from enemies of thepeople; he was there to make sure that comrade Shelepin, a leader of the mostclass-conscious revolutionary class in the world, did not try to escape to theWest. If comrade Shelepin should try to run away the chief bodyguard wouldmake use of his revolver. In the back of the neck, between the ears. To makesure that comrade Shelepin did not get very far. What's more, comradeShelepin, a falling star of the first magnitude, knew

that the chief bodyguardwas not a bodyguard but a gaoler. Shelepin knew what orders the chiefbodyguard had. And I knew too.

If only they had given me such orders.

*It is disinformation.'

The Navigator was cross. I kept quite. What could I say to such a statement?He had a coded message in his hand. Our friend No. 706 had started producing'disinformation'. When the documents obtained from him had been studied ithad been impossible to detect any attempt to deceive the GRU. But the GRUalways bought several samples of every document, every apparatus and every

weapon, and bought them in different parts of the world. Each piece ofinformation was compared, every time, with every document and every otherscrap of information. If anyone tried to add something of his own or to concealsomething, the Information Service would discover it. That is what hadhappened on this occasion with my friend from the exhibition. No.173-V-4I-706.

Everything had been going well. But then, in the last document receivedfrom him, there were three pages missing. They were important pages, andthey had been removed in such a way that it was impossible to tell they had everbeen there. It was only by comparing the document with another, obtainedperhaps through Algeria or Ireland, that it was possible to assert that someonewas trying to deceive us. The change had been very skilfully carried out,obviously by experts, and that meant that No. 706 was under somebody else'scontrol. Whether he had gone to the police himself and confessed or whetherhe had been caught was of no importance. The most important fact was that hewas under control.

*Do you wish me to remove No. 706?'

The Navigator shot out of his chair.

TuU yourself together, major! Have you gone crazy? Been reading too manycheap novels? "If you betray us we shall kill you, as an example to the others."But if we were to kill a respectable middle-class owner of a firm, what wouldthat teach anybody? Who knows that he was mixed up with us? I would puthim out of the way if he were a danger to us. But he knows absolutely nothingabout us. He doesn't even know whether he was working for the KGB or theGRU. We never gave him

any such information. The only secret he possesses isthe fact that Viktor Suvurov is a spy. But the whole world knows that. Thetemptation to kill is strong. That's the way many inteUigence services act.They let themselves get drawn into a secret war and forget their main job,which is to obtain secret information. We need secrets, as a healthy man needssexual intercourse. Remember, major, that only a weak, stupid man, lackingconfidence in himself, ever kills or rapes a woman. That is exactly the waycheap newspapers and noveUsts depict us - as weak and stupid, A smart man,or a smart, strong and self-confident intelligence service does not chase afteragents or after women.

*A man who has hundreds of women does not take revenge on one who isunfaithful to him, for the simple reason that he has no time to bother with her.He has lots of other girls. By the way, do you have anything in reserve?'

Tou mean new friends?'

*What else do you think I mean?' He suddenly flared up.

The Navigator knew, of course, that I had no other friends apart from 706and not even a suggestion of an interesting contact. He had put the questiononly to be able to rub my nose in the mud.

'No, comrade general, I have nothing in reserve.'

Then, back to support work!'

*Very well.'

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I had one more meeting with No. 706. He was under supervision, but there wasnot the shghtest need to let him see that the GRU knew about it.

I conducted the meeting as always. I paid him and told him that for the timebeing we did not need any more of his material. I told him we'd meet in a year'stime. Maybe we would have some request then. In a year some excuse would befound for putting him out to 'conservation'. To the sleeping network, to awaita sign from us. That would be the end of our contact with him: let him waituntil some very important illegal approached him. He and the police could goon waiting. They'd have to wait a long time. This was known as 'severingcontact with the appearance of preserving it'. We had

obtained very importantapparatus from him which had saved us miUions. His material, when it wasfirst-class stuff, was also used for checking someone else's. But the time hadcome to say goodbye. He would be left waiting for a sign, for an especiallyimportant meeting.

I had no problems with 706. But what was I to do now? A Borzoi again. Againthe dreary work of backing up others. But what did I really want to do? If Icouldn't work independently I would have to work for other people.

I was again on back-up work, responsible entirely to the First Deputy anddeprived of the right to approach the Navigator direcdy. He had no time forpeople like me. It is true that those who had had some success also had to doback-up work occasionally, but that happened only during a large-scalerecruitment drive when the whole residency was sent out on operations whoseobjective had been dictated from above. They were also drawn into the work ofbacking up operations conducted by the GRU's illegal residencies. That was adifferent matter. To be ordered to back up an illegal was an honour. But weBorzois were very seldom sent to back up illegals. We were left with thedifficult, thankless work which involved great risks, an enormous amount oftime and no rewards. Merely supporting agents in their contacts was notconsidered work at all. Something like a secretary-typist working for a greatwriter. Neither money nor fame. But if you made a mistake you soon knew allabout it.

Such was the work I was doing on this occasion. I was off for a picnic in themountains. It was really not the right time of year for picnics: the weather wasnot suitable, but I had to get up into the mountains. If I was followed and wewere arrested and expelled from the country, I would think up a morereasonable cover story. But we are seldom interfered with in Great Britain,

practically never in the United States of America, and in other countries, well,for spies we are treated rather well. So there was no need to think up anythingoriginal. A picnic - that was good enough. I knew people did not go for picnicson their own. But does anybody really care what a Soviet diplomat does in hisworking day?

In the boot of my car was an anti-tank grenade launcher known as the RPG-7and five grenades to go with it. It was all carefully packed and had to bedeposited in a dead drop. The grenade launcher weighed six kilograms andeach grenade over two kilograms. Then there was the

packing. That madealtogether more than twenty kilos in one long grey package. I had no idea forwhom the weapon was intended. I had to hide it in the mountains in a placewhich I had spent six days searching for. Someone some time would hand overto someone else a description of the hiding place and the secret signs by whichit would be quite easy to discover it. The addressee receives details of thehiding place only after the goods have been lodged in it. Consequently, even ifhe wanted to betray us to the police, he couldn't. He would receive thenecessary directions and hurry to the spot, but I would have been long gone. Sothat I, my diplomatic residency, Soviet military intelligence, the whole SovietUnion - we would have no connection with it at all. A grenade launcher layhidden in the ground - that was all. Perhaps it had always been there from theday of Creation. Unfortunately it was a Soviet grenade launcher. Perhaps theAmericans had captured it in Vietnam and had hidden it in the Alps?

Who would need such a weapon? I hadn't the shghtest idea. It was clearlynot intended to be held in reserve in case of war. For long-term storage they useheavy containers, whereas this was very Hghtly packed. That meant thatsomeone would pick it up in the next few days. It was not impossible that it wasgoing to be used in the next few days. Otherwise it would have to be stored for along time. That was dangerous. Danm it, perhaps I was actually makinghistory: maybe that grenade launcher was destined to change the course ofhistory in a quite unexpected direction. The RPG-7 was a powerful weapon,light and simple to operate. All the top people in the West protected themselves with bullet-proof glass. But supposing they were hit by a PG-7Vgrenade? No armour would withstand it. And it had a range of 300 metres.What a conunotion there would be then. I wondered whom the GRU had got inits sights? Who were the five grenades intended for? A head of state? Somegeneral? The Pope? But the weapon could hit more than an armouredlimousine. A campaigner for the protection of the environment might hit apoison gas container or nuclear reactor as an act of protest. A peace fightermight ambush a convoy with American nuclear warheads and press the trigger.It would cause a worldwide sensation. It wouldn't cause a nuclear explosion, ofcourse, but the newspapers would make such a fuss that the West would be inserious trouble.

I made frequent turns at crossroads, kept altering my speed, joined theautoroute for a while and then went off again down obscure country roads. Itseemed that there was no one on my tail. Nobody was interested in me. I was

alone, in a dense forest on a narrow road. The wind swayed the trees above myhead. I parked the car on the roadside, where tourists often stopped.

I was sitting on a httle hillock in a fir-wood and keeping my car underobservation. I had not been followed -1 could guarantee that. But it was alwayspossible that the poUce had fixed a radio device to my car which was now tellingwhere I was. Perhaps they had not been following me in the usual way but hadkept at a considerable distance. If that was the case, then someone should soonturn up at my car. All around were forests and mountains, and they couldapproach this point only by using one road which was under my observation.They might fuss around my car for a while, trying to work out in what directionI had gone. In that case I would circle around the forest, and return to my carwhen there was nobody near it. I would lock the doors from the inside andweave through the forests and mountains. Then I would go back to theembassy and repeat the whole operation from the begiiming the next day.

I looked at my watch again: thirty minutes had passed. No one hadapproached my car. The only noise came from the fir trees. I could have left thepackage with the weapon in the car and now, once I was sure that I was notbeing followed, have returned to the car, taken the package and gone off intothe hills. But that was not our way of doing things.

I remained a few minutes longer sitting in the undergrowth and hstening tothe rustling of the forest. There was no one. Then I put rubber boots on myfeet, a cap with a British Hon badge on my head, and a rucksack on my back: Ilooked just like any tourist. I had a cigar in my hand, not because I smoke, ofcourse - I was forbidden to do that years ago. But I always carried astrong-smelling cigar with me, so that I could break off the end, crumble thetobacco in my hands and scatter it around me. It was my greeting to the dogs. Ispent a long time wandering through the bushes, reached a little river andwalked up it against the current. I was not being followed, but they might turnup there in a few hours' time with dogs and hehcopters.

It was a pity that the package with the grenade launcher had such an oddshape. If anyone were to see such a strange object wrapped in waterproofmaterial sticking out of my rucksack they would be bound to assume that I waslabouring for the GRU, doing a rather humdrum job as a punishment for notbeing able to get access to secrets on my

own initiative.

I had a long way to go, and on foot. Like being in Spetsnaz. Along the littlestream, upwards. The revolutionary units of freedom fighters needed theweapons to get rid of capitalist slavery. Perhaps the grenade launcher would bepicked up by Itahan or German lads and used to strike yet another blow at thedecaying capitalist system.

My long walk gave me time to engage in a httle mental gymnastics. Whatcould I think up so as to get myself returned to operating on my own? I couldwrite a report for the head of the 5 th department of the 1st directorate andsuggest something original. For example, that the Germans or Italians shouldkidnap the President or Minister of Defence. That would be good for them, fortheir revolutionary aims and for raising the revolutionary awareness of the

masses. They could bring the kidnapped official to trial before a revolutionarytribunal and execute him. But before doing that we could have a talk with him,subject him to torture and extract some secrets from him.

I continued staggering through the water, smiling at my own fantasies. Iwould, of course, never propose such a thing. It was a thankless business,giving advice. The people who had good ideas were never remembered. It wasnot the originators but the executors who were rewarded. It was a simple idea,and they didn't need me to think of it. I needed to think of something in whichI would be not only the originator but also the executor. And it needed to be nota general idea but something specific. Before putting it to the Commander Iwould have to prepare thousands of details and be totally involved in the plan,so that I would not be pushed to one side and that the operation would not beentrusted to more experienced men.

The clear mountain stream bubbled along beneath my feet. Sometimes Iwent up on the bank to get round a waterfall. On those occasions I would againbreak off a piece of cigar, rub the tobacco between my fingers and spread itaround. And I stepped only on the rocks, so as to leave no tracks.

At last I reached the place I had chosen and which had been approved by theFirst Deputy and confirmed by the head of the 1st directorate of the GRU. Adead drop is never chosen in a cave or a concealed cellar. It has to be a placewhich can easily be found by the person who is

supposed to find it and which isvery difficult for anyone else to discover. It has to be a place where our goodscannot be found by chance and where they won't suffer from the weather orany natural disasters.

The dead drop I had selected complied with these requirements. It was inthe mountains far from any human habitation. It was in a cleft between twocliffs and concealed by an impenetrable thicket of prickly bushes. It was a placewhich tourists did not frequent and where curious children did not play. Therewas never going to be any building there and it was not threatened bylandslides or flooding. But it was easy to find if you knew how to look for it.There was a high-voltage electric power line on tall metal pylons. From pylonNo. 042 you had to walk towards pylon No. 041 as far as the point where thewire was at its lowest and then turn to the left. Then thirty metres at rightangles to the power cable. You had to ignore the prickly bushes and arrive at apile of stones and the ashes of a camp-fire which had been lit many years before.Not a very pleasant place: damp, dark and prickly. The last time I was there,when I found the place, I had thrown down all sorts of rubbish that I'd foundlying around - a rusty tin, a bottle and a roll of wire. That was to discouragepeople from picnicing there.

Once again I looked round carefully at the area. Nothing had changed sincemy first visit. Even the tin was in the same place. I listened carefully to thesound of the wind in the mountain tops. There was nobody. I threw off the

rucksack, which was wearing me down after the long journey. I had suggestedto the First Deputy that I bury the weapon in the ground, but he had instructedme simply to cover it up with stones, as heavy as possible. I had also suggestedtaking a stray cat from the embassy and bringing it there to sacrifice in theinterests of the world proletariat. A dead cat in a state of decomposition wouldkeep the place clear of hunters and tourists and amorous pairs seeking asecluded spot. That suggestion was also turned down. The First Deputyordered me instead to use a hquid known as ZRG, type 4.1 had a small bottle ofit. It has the smell of burning rubber, and it lasts for several weeks, keepinguninvited people away and guaranteeing soHtude to those due to take over mypackage. I could only wish them good luck, those fearless fighters for freedomand social justice. I hstened once again to the wind and then squeezed inbetween the rocks.

I already knew Western Europe pretty well, as a hunting dog knows theneighbouring wood. I could have worked as a tourist guide in Amsterdam orHamburg. On one occasion I was working in Basel, but not alone. I wasbacking up someone else. Basel is where Germany, France and Switzerlandmeet, and it's a very useful place, a unique place. Basel is a crossroads. Youcould be there and suddenly disappear. It was so easy.

I was sitting in a httle restaurant directly opposite the railway station. It wasin fact difficult to say whether it was a restaurant or just a bar. It was dividedinto two, with a restaurant on one side - quite small, with red table-cloths. Onthe other side was a bar with wooden tables and no table-cloths. That's where Iwas sitting, alone. There was some decoration and the date '1932' carved intothe wooden table top. It meant that the table had been there even before Hitlercame to power. It must be good to be Swiss. The frontier with Germany wasright there, just across the road. But war had never reached here.

A pretty, big-bosomed woman placed a mug of beer before me on a cleanbeer mat. How was she to know that I was already on the warpath? That I wascounting the seconds in my head, and that I was not sitting in that spot bychance but so as to be able to see the big clock on the station building? Shecould not know that somebody else was timing himself by that clock- someoneI didn't know and would never know. Nor could she know that I had smearedthe ends of my fingers with MMP cream so that they would not leave anyfingerprints. Nor could she know that I had in my pocket what looked like anordinary china handle such as hangs on the chains in lavatories. You pull it andthe water flushes down. That handle, however, had been put together by theCamouflage Institute of the GRU. Inside it was a container and in it perhapsthe description of a hiding place or some money or gold, goodness knows what.I did not know what was in the container. But in exactly seven minutes I wouldgo to the toilet and in the last cabin but one remove the handle from the chain,put it in my pocket and in its place put the one that was in my pocket.

Somebody who was now also watching the station clock would then go into thecabin after me, remove the handle and put an ordinary one in its place. He hadthat already in his pocket and was probably also clutching it in his hand, alsosmeared with MMP cream. All three handles were identical. There was no wayof distinguishing them. The Camouflage Institute did a good job.

The hand on the big clock trembled sHghtly. Another six minutes. Therewas building going on next to the station. Either the station was being extendedor they were building a hotel. The construction behind the scaffolding lookedvery imposing, a sort of tower. The walls were of brown metal and the windowswere also dark, practically brown. High above were workmen in orangeprotective hats. And pigeons on the cornices. There was one particular pigeonslowly and with concentration killing its comrade, hitting it with its beak in theback of the neck.

A pigeon is a revolting bird. Neither hawks nor wolves nor crocodiles kill foramusement. But pigeons do just that. They kill their kind simply for fun. Andthey kill slowly, to prolong the pleasure. If only I had had a Kalashnikovautomatic in my hands. I would have pushed the safety-catch down toautomatic fire and sprayed the station square of sleepy Basel with bullets. Iwouldn't have bothered about my diplomatic status or feared the conse-quences. I would have given the murdering pigeon a long burst of fire. I wouldhave scattered it with lead, turned it into a mess of feathers and blood. But Ihad no automatic with me. I wasn't in Spetsnaz, but on intelligence work.What a pity. Because I would happily have killed it — and not bothered aboutthe fact that in saving the weaker pigeon from certain death I was savinganother murderer. Because they are all the same by nature. It would have comeround, got its strength back and sought out another, weaker pigeon to stabwith its beak. It would know exactly where to strike too, just as professionallyas an executioner in the NKVD. A repulsive bird, the pigeon. Yet there arepeople who regard this cold-blooded killer as a symbol of peace. You wouldhardly take a crocodile or an anaconda snake as your symbol of peace. But theanaconda is a very peaceful creature. It kills only for food, and as soon as it haseaten it goes to sleep. It finds no pleasure in torturing other beings, and nordoes it kill its own kind.

The weak pigeon on the cornice had spread its wings and its head washanging down. The strong one had drawn itself together, ready to strike andstrike again. I had no time to watch the end of the affair. I was off to the toiletfor a top secret operation in support of another officer.

I was not wasting any time. When I was working in Germany I thought abouthow to get my hands on German secrets. When I was in Italy I thought abouthow to get hold of Itahan secrets. But in Italy you could also recruit Amercians,Chinese or Australians. I needed the sort of people who possessed state secrets.I had just returned from Basel and was reporting to the Navigator the results of

the operation. I usually reported to the First Deputy, but on this occasion theNavigator heard me personally. It had apparently been a very importantoperation. I took advantage of the occasion to offer him my suggestions abouthow to obtain secret documents about the 'Florida' system. 'Florida' isSwitzerland's anti-aircraft defence system. It might not seem very important initself, but it was a similar system, and thus a key, to the anti-aircraft defences ofthe United States. If one could get to know a Swiss sergeant it might clarify agreat deal about the American system.

The Navigator gave me a very grim look. There was nothing but lead in hiseyes. They were the eyes of a bull taking a long look at a young toreador beforepicking him up on his mighty horns. The Navigator's look put me off. I hadnames and addresses of people on the staff of the command centre of the Swissanti-aircraft defence system. I knew how to get to know a sergeant there. I evenknew the address of the printing works which printed secret documents for thecommand centre. But the Navigator was still crushing me with his look. I wasput off my stride and forgot my carefully prepared hst of ideas.

T will try to do this '

He remained silent.

'I will report all developments '

He was still silent.

'Our chaps in Switzerland can recruit Swiss people if they need to. And wecan do it too, from Austria.'

He drew in through his nostrils a huge quantity of air and then noisily, like awhale, expelled it.

'Get back to your present work!'

Intelligence back-up work is like sweet syrup for flies. It doesn't seemdangerous, it's quite sweet, but you can't get yourself out of it. Your wings getheavy, so you sink and perish in it. Only the man who manages to get out canbecome a real intelligence officer. Genka, the Consul, for example. He arrivedin Vienna along with me and they gave us each three months to get to know thecity, so that we would know it better than the police did. Three months later weboth had to pass an examination: ten seconds to think - 'What's on the

LuegerPlatz? Give the names of all the shops, hotels, restaurants and the numbers ofthe buses that stop there. Quickly now.' Maybe there's no hotel there? Comeon, come on. We had to get to know the city better than the local policeman.'Name all the streets crossing Taborstrasse. Quickly! How many stops? Howmany post boxes? If you set off in the direction of... what's on the left of you?'And so on.

Both Genka and I passed the exam at the second try. If you didn't pass at thethird go you were sent back to the Soviet Union. After the exams I was putstraight on to back-up work. But not Genka. While he was learning the city hefound time to get to know some crook selling and buying passports. He had

passports which were partly false, some with blank pages, and some which hadsimply been stolen from tourists. The First Department of the GRU buys uppassports and other personal documents - diplomas, driving licences, soldiers'identity cards - in huge quantities. Not for re-use but for study and as modelsfor the production of fresh documents. None of these pieces of paper is veryhighly valued, and getting hold of them is by no means the higher form ofintelligence work. But I was put on to back-up work, while Genka wasn't: hewas getting hold of passports. And while Genka was working on passports hehad plenty of time to himself, and he didn't waste it. He got to know someoneelse and I was put on to support Genka's operations and cover his tail. After hismeetings I would be given some envelopes which I delivered to the embassy. Ifthey were to arrest somebody going into the embassy it would be me and notGennadi Mikhailovich. He was in the clear. But then he got involved in somemore serious affairs. He would go on an operation with five or six Borzoiscovering him. The following year he was promoted to lieutenant-colonelprematurely. He spent only a couple of years as a major.

I am not given to being envious or jealous. I was glad Genka was doing well.Good luck to him! I would also get myself out of back-up work in the nearfuture.

It was eight o'clock in the evening. I was hurrying home. Four hours sleepand then out again on the job.

The Navigator was smiling at me - the first time for many months.

'At last! I always knew you would eventually strike out on your own. Howdid you come to meet him?'

'By chance. I had a job to do in Innsbruck and on my way back I decided tolook for a hiding-place to have in reserve. I stopped on the side of the road,looked at the place, found it was okay and decided to go back. But my rearwheels were on the soft earth. The earth was soggy and the wheels spun. Therewas a ditch behind and I just couldn't move. So I stood at the side of the roadtrying to stop someone to help me out. They all ignored me, until a Fiat 132stopped with a driver alone in the car. He gave me a hand, giving my car a bitof a push. I was all right, but he was covered in mud: I had given the car toomuch throttle. At first I intended as a mark of gratitude to give him a bottle ofwhisky. But I changed my mind and invited him for a meal in the restaurant,so that he could clean himself up. The meal was on me, I said - I'm invitingyou.'

'Did he accept?'

'Yes. We had supper, and he invited me for the next time.'

'Did he ask who you were?'

'No, he only asked where I lived. I told him Vienna. I do indeed live inVienna now.'

'Did you have a diplomatic number on your car?'

'No. I was doing back-up work. In someone else's car.'

The Navigator turned the visiting card over in his hands. He was fascinatedby it. An engineer. From Otto Velara. It wasn't every day that a general of theGRU held such a visiting card in his hand. 'Otto Velara'. A real goldmine!There may be some people who underestimate Italy as a country of greatthinkers, but not the GRU. The GRU knows that the Italians have very goodbrains, the brains of great inventors. Few people reahse that before the SecondWorld War Italy's technology was at an incredibly high level. The ItaHans werenot especially brilliant in battle, and that obscured the extent of Italianachievement in military technology. In fact those achievements, especially inthe spheres of aviation, submarines and high-speed launches, were reallyamazing. Before the war GRU colonel Lev Manevich had shipped from Italy tothe Soviet Union tons of technical documentation of tremendous importance.The Itahans were the unrecognised geniuses of mihtary and naval technology.There might be some who did not beheve it, but the GRU did. 'Otto Velara'!An engineer!

'You don't think he's being planted on us?' It was the last thing theNavigator wanted to beheve, but he had to put the question.

'No,' I said with much assurance. 'I have checked him out. And the radiomonitors detected nothing suspicious.'

'Don't get excited. You mustn't do that in this business. If he is not a plantyou've been very lucky indeed.'

That much I understood myself.

'This is what we'll do,' said the Navigator. 'We have nothing to lose. Let'squickly draw up a check hst. Can you do it by tomorrow?'

'I'm on back-up work tonight.'

He frowned, then picked up the telephone and, without dialling anynumber, said, 'Come in.'

The First Deputy came in.

'Find someone to put in Viktor Andreyevich's place tomorrow.'

'There isn't anybody, comrade general.'

'Just think.'

'There's only Gennadi Mikhailovich.'

'The consul?'

'Yes.'

'Put him on to back-up work. Let him do a bit of that; he's started to thinktoo much of himself. Keep Viktor Andreyevich off all back-up work. He's gota very interesting scheme coming together.'

The coded reply came a couple of days later. The Navigator was not at allanxious to part with 'Otto Velara', with a firm that built amazingly fast andpowerful naval ships. The Navigator didn't want to read the message out tome. He simply repeated the reply received from the GRU command point:

'No.' The message did not explain why the reply was *No'. But in any case *No'meant that the man from Otto Velara was a person known to

the GRU'scomputer. If nothing had been known about him the answer would have beenpositive. It was a pity to lose such an interesting man. And the Navigator wasprobably sorry for me, perhaps for the first time. He could see that I wasbursting to be a Viking, and he really didn't want to put me among the Borzoisagain. He said nothing. But I knew that there was a frightful shortage ofmanpower for back-up work.

'I have to work on back-up tomorrow, comrade general. May I leave?'

'Off you go,' he said and suddenly smiled. 'You know' - and for the first timehe used the familiar form of address - 'every cloud has a silver lining.'

'I, comrade general, seem always to get clouds without silver linings.'

'Maybe not this time. You have been forbidden to meet him, and that's bad.But we have at least added one more scrap of information to our store ofexperience.'

I looked enquiringly at him.

'You got into trouble and as a result you made the acquaintance of aninteresting person. In our work the first encounter is always very difficult.How to approach someone? How to start a conversation? How to develop theacquaintance? In future, as soon as you come across an interesting person, runinto his car. Then you've got contact. Get his address from him. Apologise tohim, invite him for a drink, find out what he's interested in. Coins? Stamps?You have something to exchange and there's your contact.'

'Comrade general, are you ready to pay for the crashed cars?' I was laughing.

'Certainly,' he replied seriously.

Chapter Eleven

I was being sucked ever deeper into the sticky syrup of agent back-up work.There was no way of getting out.

When a bricklayer builds a wall he gets three helpers by law - someone tomix the mortar, someone to carry the bricks and someone to cut the bricks tosize when necessary. But in the work of

intelligence-gathering many morehelpers are needed for each operational officer. And everyone wants to be thebricklayer. No one wants to be a helper. But you can become a skilled workeronly if you can prove that you can do the job as well as or even better than theother skilled men. And how can you do that if back-up work takes up all yourtime? Every night, every weekend and every hohday.

Nikolai Viktorovich Podgorny, the Soviet President, has disappeared. Van-ished into thin air. He was around, and now he isn't. The President is of coursea very small pawn, practically nothing, really just a screen. Something like aSoviet ambassador, who swaggers around the embassy, receives importantpeople, shakes them by the hand and smiles, but doesn't take any decisions,and has no access to important secrets. Let him go on smiling and shakinghands: that's his job. But we in the GRU have a direct chain of command. TheNavigator is responsible to the head of the GRU. He is responsible to the Chiefof the General Staff, who in turn is directly responsible to the CentralCommittee of the Party. Ambassadors and presidents are just camouflage. Ascreen.

But, for goodness' sake, if a president, even if he is deprived of any real

power, can disappear, if he is remembered for only half a day Is anybody

likely to remember me if I should suddenly disappear?

I have stretched my weary legs under the table and I feel good. It is so quiet andcosy here, that one cannot help but fall asleep. I am tired. A soft melody, a greyhaired pianist.... He is no doubt a great musician, but tired like me. He hasclosed his eyes, and his fingers, the long agile fingers of a virtuoso, continue toplay out of habit, dancing across the keyboard of an enormous grand piano. Heis good enough for the finest orchestra in Vienna, but for some reason he plays

in the Schwarzenberg Cafe. Have you ever been there? I can thoroughlyrecommend it. If you are burdened by arduous, exhausting work; if you arered-eyed, have aching legs and your nerves are on edge, then come to theSchwarzenberg, order a cup of coffee and settle down in a corner. Of courseone can sit outside in the open, at a small white table. But that's not for me. Ialways go inside and over to the right, to the corner next to the large window,closed off by semi-

transparent white curtains. Of course when it is hot inVienna, everyone sits outside in the fresh air. It's very pleasant to do. But thensomeone might be watching me from a distance. I don't like the idea thatsomeone might be able to see me. That's why I always go inside.

From my corner I can see everyone who enters the room. I sometimes lookoutside from behind the curtains, out on to the Schwarzenberg Platz. Nobodyseems to be watching me now, and it's good to be alone in such comfort.Mirrors, abstract paintings, luxurious carpets. Dark brown walls of poUshedoak. The soft music, and the intoxicating aroma of coffee, with its stimulatingand soothing effect. If I had a castle, I would certainly have walls like these,upon which I would hang these decadent mirrors and pictures, and in thecorner I would place this huge grand piano with the elderly pianist. In front ofme I would have a cup of coffee and sit with my legs stretched out under thetable, my chin resting on my hand.

I think I have heard this tune before, a long time ago, and that I have seenthese pictures on the oaken walls, and the small tables. Of course I have seen itall before, of course I remember that delicate aroma and enchanting melody.All of this I have seen before. It was long ago, years ago. There was a vastbeautiful city. There was a quiet square, crossed with tramlines, and a cafewith large windows. There was this same unforgettable aroma and this samepeaceful music. But at that time, on the square next to the cafe with whitetables, there were parked three grimy tanks with white stripes. They stoodthere silently, without interfering with the wonderful music. It was a hotsummer. The huge windows of the cafe were open and through this one flowedthe melody like the sound of a woodland stream. For some reason I couldpicture quite clearly three grimy tanks with white stripes on the Schwarzen-berg Platz.

Tanks have a quite distinctive smell about them. It cannot be confused withanything else. Do you like the smell of tanks? I do too. The smell of a tank is thesmell of metal, of enormously powerful engines, of field tracks. Tanks roll intotowns from the woods and fields, bringing with them the lingering smell ofleaves and fresh grass. The smell of tanks is the smell of wide open spaces andof power. It is a smell that intoxicates, like the smell of wine and blood. I cansense this smell in the quiet Viennese cafe quite clearly, and with equal clarity Ican picture the thousands of grimy tanks on the streets of Vienna. The cityseethes, seized with fear and indignation, and along its streets thunder columnupon column of tanks. From narrow side-streets and blind corners, more andmore armoured dinosaurs appear. As the

drivers change up, the engines throwout clouds of dense black smoke mixed with unburnt fuel and lumps of soot.

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Grating and thundering, sparks flying from beneath the tracks. Soldiers withfaces blackened by soot-laden fumes. Tanks on the wide boulevards and in thenarrow streets, tanks ... everywhere. An old man, weeping, with shaggy greybeard, shouts something and shakes his fist, but who hears him? Is it possibleto silence the roaring of the tanks' engines? Too late, old man, you started tocry out too late. You ought to have done it when the leather boots crashed downon the pavements. When the air above the city is filled with the roaring andgrating of countless tanks, it is too late to shout. One must either shoot, orremain silent. The city teems with people, there is smoke everywhere.Somewhere there is shooting, somewhere else people are shouting. The smellof burning rubber, the smell of coffee, the smell of blood, the smell of tanks.

I am probably going mad. There is one other possibility, that they all wentmad long ago, and I alone am an exception. There is even a third possibility,that everyone went mad a long time ago. Those who appeared mounted ongrimy tanks in fine tranquil cities, were without a shadow of a doubtschizophrenic. Those who still Uve in fine peaceful cities know that one day,sooner or later, these tanks will appear on the Schwarzenberg Platz and theywill do nothing to prevent it. They too are schizophrenic.

What about me? I have already been one of the Uberators, and it is not aspleasant as might appear from the wings. I no longer wish to play that role. Sowhat do I do? Do I run away? A marvellous idea. I will go and Uve in thewonderful world of naive and carefree people. I will go and sit in the cafe, withmy legs stretched under the table, my chin resting on my hand. I will hsten tothis magical melody. When the grimy tanks appear with their white stripes, Iwill stand in the crowd, shout and shake my fist. It is bad being the citizen of acountry whose streets are patrolled by the grating and clanking armouredcolumns of liberators. Is it better to be one of the Uberators?

The Soviet military attache in Vienna has vanished too. Disappeared. Van-ished into thin air. He has been home to the Soviet Union, 'evacuated', as wesay. The evacuation of GRU or KGB officers is ordered if they have committedmajor mistakes or if they are completely ineffective, if they are suspected ofhaving the kind of contacts with foreigners which are not permitted or if theyare

suspected of preparing to defect.

Why the military attache has been evacuated I do not know. It will never berevealed. He has vanished and that's aU. He has gone on leave and wUl notreturn. The Soviet Union is large and he has got lost somewhere.

His green Mercedes has been inherited by the new military attache. ColonelTsvetayev. He is giving himself airs, considering himself the big boss. Ourneighbours in the KGB think he is the First Deputy. But with us, as in anysimilar organisation, a man's official position means nothing. We have our ownhierarchy which is secret and undercover. It is an unseen world.

Carry on, colonel, show off a bit. But watch out: very soon the Navigator will

summon you to his office for a dressing down. He will inform you very politelythat you are not responsible to the Navigator personally, nor to the FirstDeputy or even to one of the deputies to the Navigator, but just to one of themore successful of the GRU's operational officers, a Viking. And he may turnout to be anybody in the embassy, your own assistant, for example. Officiallyin public you will continue to smile and shake hands and the assistant militaryattache with the rank of major or heutenant-colonel will go behind you carryingyour briefcase. You will go around in a Mercedes, while he's in a Ford. Butthat's only for the outside world, and has no real importance. In the daytimethe head of the Mafia may pretend to be a waiter. But that doesn't mean that themanager of the restaurant has greater influence. In the GRU we have the samesystem. The rank which you have on the surface is not important. It's just forshow. In fact we take care to keep our leaders and more talented officers in thebackground and out of the limehght, and we push on to the stage those whoenjoy showing off. Behind the scenes we have our own ranks, our own relativeimportance and our own scale of values. And behind the scenes the Vikingcommands the Borzoi. The Viking - the operational officers - gets them by thethroat and digs out the secrets. He has to be backed up. Your assistant hasalready got himself up to the level of active officer, while you, colonel, are stillonly a Borzoi, a little puppy-dog, a dogsbody. You will be using your Mercedesto back up your assistant. For the slightest mistake the major will ridicule youin the presence of all our spying brotherhood. And for bigger mistakes you'llgo to prison. He is getting hold of secrets for the GRU and you

are simplycovering his tail. It is he who will write a report on you: your fate is in hishands. If you make a mistake you will be done for and you'll disappear. Youwill be evacuated, like your predecessor. But keep smiling, little dog, just keepsmiling. And remember: in three months you will have an examination inknowledge of the city. You'd better know Vienna even better than the pohcedo: there'll be a hundred questions and there ought to be a hundred correctanswers. A wrong answer could lead to a mistake in operational work. Thatwould mean failure, a scandal, a Central Committee commission and prison.And if you pass the examination, colonel, you will be put on to back-up work,covering other people's tails, with no days off, no holidays and no hope.Meanwhile, keep smiling.

The work of backing up operational officers may be specific or general. On thisoccasion the whole of our glorious residency was engaged on specific back-up.The whole team. The whole pack.

The work was being co-ordinated by the Navigator himself. The Sovietambassador and the consul-general were on general duties and hadn't theslightest idea what was going on. They had simply received a coded messagefrom the Central Conmiittee instructing them to cover, protect and conceal. Ifwe, on direct duty, were to slip up, those on general duties would put up a

smokescreen to protect us. Just as an octopus retreats from an enemy behind acurtain of dense liquid. The ambassador and the consul-general would startshouting, protesting, accusing the Austrian police of slandering and provokingus. They would deny absolutely everything. They would stare the policebrazenly in the face and put on a show of injured innocence. They wouldthreaten a worsening of diplomatic relations and the end of detente. Theywould recall that the Red Army had selflessly liberated Austria. They wouldrefer to the number of hves lost in the war and to the crimes of the Nazis. Thatwas their job. They were there to cover our retreat in case we made a mistake.

But we had so far made no mistakes. All was going well. The operation wewere carrying out required the combined efforts of several residencies and allthe active agents in each of the residencies were drawn into the operation.

A tank engine was being transported. It had already crossed severalcountries in transit, going from west to east. It would arrive in

Hungary, whereit would change direction sharply.

The tank engine weighed a ton and a half. Our agents had got hold of it insome unknown country and had transported it across the frontier under somedisguise. It had been travelling a long time, crossing many frontiers and alwayschanging its disguise, just as a GRU undercover agent changes passports as hecrosses a border.

The container with the tank engine was already in Austria, where it wasdescribed as an 'experimental power unit for irrigation systems'. There isstarvation in Asia and Africa! Please allow the 'experimental unit' to passthrough - help poor countries solve their food problem!

It was nerve-racking work and very hard going. A person who has never beenconcerned with the transport of heavy loads across state frontiers can have noidea how many bureaucrats are involved in it. And the GRU had to be sure thatnot one of them suspected the real purpose behind the 'experimental powerunit'. If anyone among them should suddenly guess correctly he was immedi-ately to receive rich payment for his perceptiveness and for keeping his guess tohimself. Each one of them had to controlled by the GRU, if only at a distance.That was what we were doing.

One of our best officers must be due for a medal. A tank engine, and of thelatest design. Not for copying, of course, but for study. Just as an Americandesigner of racing motor-bikes would be very interested in the latest Japaneseengine.

Where could I get my hands on something like that, damn it? There wereplenty of interesting things about, and it was often not very difficult to get holdof them. But the Information Service of the GRU always bought up three orfour identical samples in different parts of the world, and that was that. Theydidn't need any more. What they wanted was the very latest model, that no onecould get his hands on. Sometimes you would offer them something fantas-tically interesting and they would turn it down. Thanks, but the GRU'sundercover residency in Tunis worked faster. Thanks, we've got one already.

There was fierce competition in the GRU. Only the fastest survived.

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Time passed very slowly. I was on night-duty. The light in our undergroundoffice was always the same—blue. It could be turned up or down, but itremained blue. It was 2:43 in the morning. I felt like walking around to keepsleep at bay. Normally there are no windows

at all in premises occupied by aresidency. In ours in Vienna there were only three in the whole vast area. Youhad to leave the main office and go into the corridor, up the stairs, past thephotographic laboratory to corridor 'C and from there upstairs. There wereforty-eight steps. There you came to a little passage leading to the heavy doorinto the aerial room. In the passageway there were three windows. The placewas known as the Nevsky Avenue, probably because anyone who had had to sitfor hours in the depths of our fortified premises yearned to get out into the littlecourtyard and enjoy the sunshine. The courtyard was cut off from our workingarea by dozens of doors, concrete barriers and walls. It was a place where youwere not allowed to discuss secret matters. Nevertheless the three windowswere protected as all windows in GRU premises were protected. From theoutside they looked no different from the other windows - the same grilles aseverywhere. But our windows were slightly opaque, so that from the outside itwas very difficult to make out what was going on inside. The window paneswere very thick, and unbreakable. Moreover, thick glass vibrates less andtherefore does not act as a membrane if a powerful source of electromagneticrays is trained on it. The panes of glass seemed not to have been very carefullymade - they were thicker in one place and thinner in another. But that was alsodeHberate. The unevenness of the glass was calculated by an electronicmachine, and someone had received a prize for having invented it. Even if ourwindows were used as membranes the uneven glass would disperse thereflected beam in a chaotic manner and make it impossible to get satisfactoryreception. None of the windows opened, of course. There was a specialventilation system which was kept under guard and which I knew nothingabout. But it was clear that the windows were not used for that purpose.

In addition, every window was treble-glazed. The frames were of metal andthere were liners between the metal sections, so as further to reduce vibration.From both inside and outside the glazing looked like ordinary window panes,but if you looked closely at the central frame you could see that the pane of glasswas not at the same angle. Each pane was at a sHghtly different angle, alsocalculated by an electronic machine. This was to prevent the possibility of thewindows being used for eavesdropping on us. The walls were even betterprotected, of course. Especially there, deep under the ground, where we didour work.

Outside it was as black as pitch. I knew that: I had come there only so as to beable to walk around the corridors and stairs. I was duty officer and dared notfall asleep.

The whole night shift was working practically without any participation or

interference on my part. The TS' group worked round the clock picking upand deciphering mihtary and government radio messages. The control groupwas also engaged on radio interception. But it was a quite different kind ofwork. The TS' was working in the interests of the Information Service of theGRU, picking up scraps of information out of which the command point andthe central computer were continually putting together a general picture ofwhat was going on in the world. The radio control group had differentfunctions, though not less responsible ones. They were working only for ourresidency, keeping watch on what the local police were doing. The groupalways knew what the Viennese poUce were up to, how their force had beendistributed round the city, and whom their plain-clothes agents were follow-ing. The radio control could always tell us if, for example, today the poHce hadbeen following a suspicious-looking Arab at the railway station or thatyesterday the whole force had been put on to catching a group of drug-pedlars.Very often it was not possible to work out what the poUce were up to, but eventhen the radio monitors were always ready to warn us where any particularpolice activity was going on.

Apart from the group intercepting radio transmissions, the radio operatorsand cipher clerks also worked at night. But I did not have the right to enquireinto their work. So why did I have to sit there all night? Because it was so laiddown. There were various different groups at work which were not subord-inate to one another. So someone had to be in charge. That was why we didnight duty.

I was just an ordinary operational officer of no particular distinction, but forall of them I was the incarnation of authority. It didn't matter to them whetherI was a Viking or a Borzoi. I belonged to the upper class. I was much higher upthe scale than any of those who had no contact with foreigners. For any ofthem, irrespective of their mihtary rank, to become an operational officer was abeautiful but unreahsable dream.

*Coffee, Viktor Andreyevich?'

It was Borya, the third cipher clerk. He had nothing to do. The mainreceiver was silent and the receiver used for communication with agents wasalso quiet.

*Yes please, Borya.'

I was preparing to complete my description of the landing grounds I hadselected for a Spetsnaz company of the 6th Guard Tank Army. On instructionsfrom the GRU I had selected three possible places, in case of war. But sinceBorya had left his workplace I clearly would not be able to finish the work.

'Sugar?'

*No, Borya. I never take sugar.'

Borya worshipped at the throne of Venus. GRU and KGB cipher clerksround the world all worshipped the same lady. Borya knew that I had a lot ofwork to do, but he hovered around, trying to find a way of diverting myattention from the next war and of turning it to a discussion of mattersconcerning his religion.

* Viktor Andreyevich.'

*What is it?' I replied without looking up from my notebook.The dip-couriers have produced a new rhyme."A dirty one, of course?'That's the only kind they ever have.'*Damn you, Borya. Come on, let's hear your rhyme.'Borya coughed and cleared his throat and then, in the pose of a great poet,recited:

'I walk in the dewMy feet in the muck.I'm just like you,I just want to fuck.'

*I heard that, Borya, long before you.'

Borya was disappointed: he thought he had something new. But he wasn'tupset for long.

'I'll tell you one that very few people have heard. In Leningrad there was awoman-chaser who produced marvellous verses:

O, Leningrad,

O my city.

All people are whores,

But you are holy!'

There was no getting away from him. Yet it would not be wise to get on badterms with him. Cipher clerks were a lower class, but they were closer thananybody to the Navigator: his faithful slaves. I had no desire to hear more of hispoetry, but there was no sense in cutting him off. It was better to turn theconversation in another direction.

*Did you work in the staff of the Leningrad military district?'

*No, I was in the eighth section of the staff of the 7th Army.'

'And after that?'

Then I went straight to Vatutinki.'

'Oho!'

Vatutinki is a top-secret little town near Moscow, where the GRU's mainradio-receiving centre is situated. Everything is secret there. Even the cem-etery. Vatutinki is paradise. But like a real paradise, it has one inconvenience.There is no way out. Anyone who lands up in Vatutinki can rest assured that hewill be buried in that same cemetery and nowhere else. A few of those who weresent to that wonderful place spent some time abroad. But their lives don'tbecome any more varied on that account. All cipher clerks are restricted to veryprecisely defined areas within an embassy. Each one has his own area. ForBorya it was just sixteen rooms, including the room he hved in, the main office,and the offices of the Navigator and his deputies. He was not allowed to go

outside those limits. To do so was a crime—a serious one. And he couldcertainly not go outside the embassy. Borya would Uve inside that area for twoyears and then he would be transported back to Vatutinki, again within arestricted area. He would not travel on his own; he would be sent under guard.But Borya was lucky. Many of those who land up in Vatutinki never goanywhere. And even they are fortimate, compared with the thousands ofcipher clerks working in the staffs of mihtary districts, fleets, armies orflotillas. For every one of them Vatutinki would be a beautiful but virtuallyunachievable dream.

* Viktor Andreyevich, tell me something, please, about prostitutes. BecauseI have to go back to Vatutinki in seven months. And the lads there will laugh atme if Fve been to Vienna and haven't any good stories to tell.'

*Borya, I don't know anything about prostitutes. I swear I don't.'

It was not that Borya was trying to provoke me on orders from above. Hesimply wanted to hear about those things. A cipher clerk who returns toVatutinki from abroad is judged by his abihty to tell stories of his sexualescapades. Everybody realises that he has been very restricted in hismovements round the embassy, sometimes to only five rooms. Everybodyrealises that his stories are made up and that no officer would dare to tell acipher clerk anything about what he sees going on. Nevertheless a goodstoryteller is appreciated in Vatutinki, as one is valued among ilHteratepeoples. In fact, the same thing can be observed among civilised peoples too:the Viennese shops, I had noticed, were cranuned full of adventure storiesabout imagined planets. Anyone with any intelligence understands that theyare pure invention, but they appreciate the authors of those inventions just asthose who tell sexy stories are valued in Vatutinki.

'Viktor Andreyevich, come on - tell me about the prostitutes. Do they reallystand out there on the street? What are they dressed in? Viktor Andreyevich, Iknow you don't go near them, but what do they look like from a distance?'

Before 1945 the life of a cipher clerk was different. They had completefreedom. They could go anywhere in the embassy, sometimes even outside(though with an escort, of course). But they were completely free. They evenwent to Vatutinki for their hohdays. After they had served for a year they had amonth's leave.

This meant, obviously, that a cipher clerk had plenty of opportunity toescape. In 1945 Igor Guzenko, who was a cipher clerk in the GRU diplomaticresidency in Ottawa, took advantage of that freedom.

Guzenko struck the Soviet Union a frightful blow, no less serious, perhaps,than when 190 German divisions were suddenly let loose against the RedArmy.

The GRU was operating as usual from the territory of one country againstanother. Its operation in Canada was directed against the USA. The residency

in Ottawa had achieved the kind of success that no other residency in the worldhad achieved. The results of its work were so astounding that all the work ofthe GRU was handled by the First Deputy Head of the GRU, while the Head ofthe GRU himself took the Ottawa

residency under his personal control anddirected its work, reporting on it only to Malenkov. Malenkov was unequalledin the power struggle. He was the very incarnation of backstage intrigue andthe concentration of power in few hands. He was an unrecognised genius. (InOctober 1952 Malenkov told the Party that it no longer had any need of aGeneral Secretary. And the Party accepted Malenkov's advice, reducing Stalinfrom the rank of General Secretary to that of an ordinary secretary, of whichthere were dozens. Malenkov then told the Party that among the varioussecretaries one should be first. So the Party made Malenkov First Secretaryand left Stalin as a simple secretary. Stalin protested, arrested Malenkov'sdoctor, accused him of espionage and extracted from him a confession thatMalenkov was also a spy. But at that point Stalin died in mysterious circum-stances, and Malenkov remained First Secretary of the Party, having liberatedhis doctor and labelled Stalin a madman.)

So in 1945 documents about American atomic secrets were arriving directlyon Malenkov's desk. It was at precisely that moment that the cipher clerkGuzenko defected and informed the West of the GRU's achievements.

After that, the cipher clerks had a very rough time. It became impossible forthem to defect in any circumstances. Even if an aircraft transporting a cipherclerk burst into flames and began to plunge to the ground, the head of theescort is obHged to shoot the man. In the same way as a diplomatic courier isobliged to break the seal on the container and press the red knob if the securityof the container is threatened in any way.

* Viktor Audrey evich, is it true that they grab passers-by by the arm andinvite them to have sex?' His voice told of a burning interest and anger. He wasan angry cipher clerk, and every cipher clerk was as angry as a randy stallion.

Prostitution is a profession. Whoring is a hobby. Anastasia, Borya's wife,belonged to the second category. She was sitting alongside me and stroking myarm. I was driving the car and so couldn't stop her. She laughed, saying she wasafraid I was going to run into a car coming the other way and was trying to helpme. When there were no oncoming cars she still kept her hand on my arm andgently squeezed it, when suddenly an oncoming car appeared.

Anastasia believed in God. Her god was Venus, like her husband. But he wasin a cage, while she was free to fly away. She was sitting alongside me. She hadvery beautiful knees.

The wives of cipher clerks had no access to any secret information and weretherefore completely free. Once a month, and sometimes more often, theycould go outside the embassy with a ridiculously small escort: just oneoperational officer. She did not, of course, have the right to be outside the

embassy in the hours of darkness, and she could not be taken into big shopswhere she might be kidnapped. Everyone knew that she was not allowed to talkto the assistants in the shops. A knowledge of languages was forbidden, and sowere attempts to communicate by gestures. But in every other way she wasfree.

'Vitya.' She did not call me 'Viktor Andreyevich', because she did notrecognise differences of rank. She divided humanity into men and women.And men were divided in turn into those who were sexually active and thosewho weren't. She apparently put me into the first category. I don't know why.But she knew best. 'Vitya, we've already been in the shops and our conscienceis clear. Won't you take me to see a film?'

'What kind of film?'

'A love story.'

That's forbidden.'

'You know, Vitya, in Somalia we had a Navigator, maybe you know him.Major-general Sherstnev, and he told me that if you were sure that no thirdperson knew about it, you could do your own thing. Otherwise life wouldn't bevery interesting.'

'And you did with him things that no third person knew about?'

'I did, Vitya.'

'But we may be followed....'

'Vitya, you are an operational officer and you know how to make sure
'

'But that takes several hours.'

'You just try to do it by using your very best check-up route.'

She was breathing fast. She was very experienced. Once a month she

wouldpersuade the Navigator to let her go round the shops. She had been accom-panied by a variety of officers. She knew that it was possible, when it wasnecessary, to check very quickly whether you were being followed or not.

I seemed to be sadly lacking in imagination. And without it you could only godownhill. An officer who planned his moves himself always did his best todisappear into the shadows and to let the men who were covering his tail getinto the police limelight. The Austrian police were actually very well disposedtowards us, but sometimes they lost their tempers. Of course, they never madea great fuss by throwing us out. It wasn't the same as Great Britain by anymeans, but all the same they sometimes expelled us from Austria. No fuss, noscandal. Nevertheless, if you hadn't been able to operate in Austria therewouldn't be much point in sending you to Holland where the police go abouttheir business much more seriously or to Canada where the prospects werenothing like they had been in 1945, before Guzenko's defection.

All Vikings stayed in the shadows. But if you were a Borzoi, everybody knewyou. It was natural to put the blame on the one nearest, lest the one who wasfurther away got too near and put the blame on you. The Vikings were right to

expose us, to push us to the front and to protect themselves with our lack ofenterprise and ability. But I would also be a Viking. I had made up my mind tothat. I wouldn't sleep at night, but I would find a way to get hold of somesecrets!

The trouble was that everything they had taught us in the Academy wasmore than twenty years out of date and had been applied in practice manytimes over. I needed new tricks.

This may sound very strange, but in order to encourage us to use ourimagination to carry out our illegal deeds, we were urged to read detectivestories. The calculation was that it would help us develop a critical attitude toother people's deeds and decisions. The authors of detective stories areprofessional entertainers of the pubhc, not professional seekers after secrets.They can cheerfully avoid the main problem, for example. How can acommander give you the job of obtaining a sample of a new weapon if nothingis known about it, nothing at all—when the world does not even suspect thatsuch a weapon exists? Yet the GRU set out on its hunt for the atomic bomb inthe United States at a time when no one else in the world suspected that it waspossible to create such a weapon, and when even the President of the USA didnot yet appreciate its real value.

In order to develop in us a more criminal approach to our work ofintelUgence-gathering, they had once taken us to a secret section of the crimemuseum in Moscow - on the Petrovka, No. 38. The Moscow poHce did not, ofcourse, know who we were. There had been plenty of secret delegations therefrom the Ministry of the Interior, the KGB, the People's Control, theKomsomol and goodness knows what other organisations. There were manypeople who needed to develop their criminal way of thinking.

There was no gainsaying it: it was an interesting museum. What I like mostof all was a machine for manufacturing money. Students at the Moscowtechnical college had made it and sold it to some Georgians for 10,000 roubles,saying, *We need real money: we can always make another counterfeitingmachine.' The students showed the Georgians where to put the colour, how toput the paper in and where to pour the spirit. The machine produced beautifulcrisp ten-rouble notes which no expert could distinguish from genuine ones.The students warned the Georgians not to let themselves be carried away:greed ruined the priest! And not to let the machine get too hot, because thatwould cause the design to run. And off the Georgians went to Georgia, wherethe started printing money in the evenings. But then the machine broke downand a mechanic had to be brought into the gang. He opened the machine andwhistled. They had been tricked. The machine was not capable of printingfalse money. A hundred real notes had been put into it. When you turned thehandle a brand new 10-rouble note popped out. But there were only a hundredof them. Once they had all popped out there were no more. The Georgianswent to the police, and the students were caught and each given three years inprison for swindling. But the Georgians got ten years apiece. For their effortsand determination to produce counterfeit money. And that

was right: the

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students had only tricked the Georgians, while the Georgians had tried to trickthe workers' and peasants' state.

People with such rich imaginations have all the luck. So what could I think

up?

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Chapter Twelve

The recruitment of agents is a very complicated business. Like hunting thesable, which you have to hit in the eye so as not to spoil the skin. A good hunterhas no difficulty in hitting the sable in the eye. The difficulty is to track down asable in the taiga.

The GRU, in its search for people who possess secret information, knowsthat there are plenty of such people. But a presidential adviser, a missiledesigner or a general staff officer are all cut off from them, by security guards,by high walls, guard dogs, secret privileges, huge pay packets. The GRU needskeepers of secrets who Hve on their own, without bodyguards, or who do nothave any bright prospects or big salaries. It wants people with secrets who areshort of money. How to find them? How to pick them out from among themillions of other people who do not have access to any secret information? Youdon't know? But I knew! Now I really knew -1 had a brilliant idea.

The trouble was that it was impossible to get in to see the Navigator. He hadbeen shut in his office for days, refusing to see anyone. The First Deputy washke a bear with a sore head: if you went near him, he would snap at you. He wasspending practically all his time in the Navigator's office. And they were joinedby Peter Yegorovich Dunayev. Officially he was a vice-consul. Unofficially hewas a colonel in the GRU and the Navigator's deputy. They had now beenjoined by another big shot - Vice-Admiral Bondar, deputy head of the 1stdirectorate of the GRU. He had arrived in Vienna as a member of somedelegation, not a military one - purely civil of course. But he was never to beseen among the delegates. He had more serious worries.

The whole group - the general, the admiral and the two colonels - veryrarely emerged from the Navigator's office. They were like shock-

workers atthe pit-face, like men trying to break the output record.

Zhenya, the fifth cipher clerk, took them their breakfast, lunch and supperto the office and later went to collect the trays. Everything was cold anduntouched. But he also brought out piles of coffee cups and ashtrays full ofcigarette ends. What was going on, Zhenya of course had no idea. All theNavigator's coded messages were handled by Alexander Ivanovich, the firstcipher clerk. But his face was always expressionless, revealing nothing.

It was quite clear from their fierce gloom that they were not discussingsuccess but failure. And not somebody else's failure: their own. What the fourof them were doing in the office was probably being called by its scientificterms: *locaUsation of a failure'. In other words, it was a major disaster which

had taken place. What they were up to I didn't know. I was not supposed toknow. It was clear that they were cutting the threads and trying to limit theextent of the failure. How were they cutting them? One could only guess. If itwas an agent who was in serious trouble, what sometimes happened was that hewould be given money and a passport and told to go to Chile or Paraguay, anddisappear. He would be given enough money to last the rest of his life. What-ever happened, it was vital that the GRU faded completely into the back-ground. Someone might have to be killed. But Uke the anaconda snake, theGRU never killed out of a love of killing. It killed only in situations of extremeneed. But it killed surely and cleanly. It was not a problem for the GRU to kill.Equally, it was not a solution this time. Things had clearly gone too far for asimple murder to solve the problem. That was why it was better at the momentnot to approach the First Deputy. He would only kick me out again.

Tour kindness, Vitya, is going to be the end of you. You simply mustn't be sogood to people. A person has the right to be kind to people up to a very definitelimit. Beyond that point you either hit out at them or you fetch up in the mudyourself. Old Darwin even provided that rule with a scientific basis. It's thefittest and the strongest who survive. They say the theory apphes only to theanimal world, and they are right. But then we are all animals. How do we differfrom them? In very httle. Other animals don't have venereal diseases. Whatelse? Only the smile. Man is able to smile. But the world doesn't become anynicer because of our smiles. To live means to survive. And survival is a struggle,a fight for a place in the sun. Don't

weaken, Viktor, and don't be too kind, orthey'll trample you underfoot.'

It was long after midnight, and there was a cool breeze coming up from thebanks of the Danube. Somewhere far in the distance a plane was landing. Therain had stopped, but big warm drops were still dripping from the chestnuttrees. The First Deputy was sitting opposite me, his sorrowful face resting onhis hand. In fact he was no longer the First Deputy: we simply went on callinghim that out of habit. And that was not all. He was now only GRU ColonelNikolai Tarasovich Moroz, an intelligence officer operating under diplomaticcover. That wasn't very much. The majority of the officers in the GRU werecolonels; there were all sorts of colonels in the GRU. It was not the rank but theactual achievements and real position that mattered. A colonel in intelligencecould be just a Borzoi. Or he could be a proud and successful Viking. A colonelcould be deputy to the Navigator or even First Deputy, and in some cases eventhe Navigator in a small residency. Colonal Nikolai Tarasovich Moroz had justbeen reduced from the second highest level to the very bottom. Dismissed. Forsuch disasters in the GRU you could fetch up in the furnace, feet first. For suchthings you could wake up in your coffin. Anyway, the First Deputy had beendismissed. Three Borzois who had always taken care of his security had beenshipped back to Moscow.

All was calm. From the outside you couldn't tell there had been any changes.Colonel Moroz's reign was over, but nobody had yet been sent to replace him.So we were being directed by the Navigator personally and through hisdeputies. It was not easy for him without a First Deputy but, to tell the truth,the Navigator himself wasn't making any great effort at the moment. Every-thing seemed to be going on its own.

Each of us endured the fall of the First Deputy in his own way and reactedaccordingly. For the TS' officers, the radio monitors, the photo-analysts, thesecurity men, the people who operated the security system, the radio oper-ators, the cipher clerks and all the others who took no part in the gathering ofintelligence, he remained a demi-god. He was after all still an operationalintelligence officer! But among us other operational officers, there was a varietyof attitudes. The captains, majors and lieutenant-colonels continued to treathim with respect. He was their equal in position and still a full colonel. Amongthe colonels themselves, especially the less successful ones, there were somewho were inclined to jeer at him. We humans are

oddly made up: those whohad tried hardest to be in his good books were now the ones who did most of thejeering. They say a friend in need is a friend indeed. Nikolai Tarasovich did nottake offence at the jokes being made. He didn't snap at people. NikolaiTarasovich simply drank. He drank a lot. The Navigator paid no attention, lethim drink. The fellow was very miserable. I had the impression that theNavigator himself was also drinking. Borya, the third cipher clerk, said thatthe Navigator was drinking in front of a mirror, locked in his office. He didn'twant to drink without the mirror because he believed that solitary drinking wasa serious form of drunkenness. I was not sure whether Borya was joking ortelling the truth. But three months previously Borya would not have dared tomake jokes like that or have revealed the Navigator's personal secrets. OurNavigator did not have such a firm hand on the situation. It was possible thatthe Navigator and the former First Deputy had an occasional drink together.But if so the Navigator kept it to himself, while Nikolai Tarasovich made noeffort to conceal his drinking.

That evening, in the pouring rain, I ran to my car, but he, poor chap, got wetthrough, fumbling with the key to his Opel.

ˆNikolai Tarasovich, get into my car and I'll drive you home.'

'How will I get to the embassy in the morning?'

'I'll pick you up on my way.' And off we went.

'Vitya, what about a drink?'

How could I refuse? So I drove him over to the other side of the Danube,where I had places that I thought probably few intelligence services knew. Andthe prices were reasonable. So we drank.

'You're too good, Viktor. You mustn't be. You help a man out in misfor-tune, and he will do you down in the end. They say people are beasts. I'mafraid I just can't agree with that, Vitya. People are worse than beasts. They areas cruel as pigeons.'

'Nikolai Tarasovich, everything will come right eventually. Don't upset

yourself. The Navigator treats you like a brother. He will back you up. Andyou've got influential connections in the Aquarium and in our directorate, atthe command point and in information ...'

That's all very true, Vitya. Only ... it's a secret... I've made a big mess ofthings, a terrible mess ... it went to the Central Committee of the Party, andconnections in the Aquarium don't help there. You probably wonder why I'mnot already back in the Soviet Union? It's because it would appear strange ifthere were a spy trial in one country and a lot of Soviet diplomats disappeared.Nosy journalists would make the connection at once. And that would be like

admitting our guilt, and showing that we were covering up our tracks So

I'm only in Vienna for the time being. When things quieten down a Uttle andit's all forgotten they'll remove me. I shall be evacuated.'

*But what if you succeeded in recruiting an especially important agent?'

He gave me a very sad look. I felt a httle awkward for what I had said. Weboth knew that miracles don't happen. But there was something in what I hadsaid that pleased him and he forced a smile.

*See here, Suvorov, I've been talking too much today, and I've no right to doso ... I'm talking because I'm drunk, but also because among all the people Iknow you are probably the one least inclined to do the dirty on others. Listen tome, Suvorov, and remember what I say. Our crowd at the moment are in a stateof complete collapse. They are half-asleep, like after having sex. That isbecause the Navigator had got it in the neck and has barely survived. But I'vebeen thrown out, and the transit of illegals through Austria has been stoppedtemporarily, and the documents collected are going to the Aquarium bydifferent channels. Many of them think there's no need to do anything. Theyhave all got lazy and careless without the firm hand of our Navigator. It won'tlast long. We have lost a priceless source of information, and the CentralCommittee will very soon remind us of the fact. The chief will be put on therack. Everyone will be questioned. The Navigator can point the finger atanyone, and he will have to choose someone to be sacrificed on the altar. Just toteach people not to get slack. Be on your guard, Viktor. Very soon theNavigator will be brought a message from Kir, and he is terrible when he is in arage. He'll wreck quite a few careers. And rightly so. Why on earth do youwant to wait around, like a flock of sheep? Get working right away, Viktor.Tomorrow it may be too late. Just heed my advice.'

* Nikolai Tarasovich, I do have quite a good idea, but it's ages since I

was ableto get to see the Navigator. Perhaps I ought to try again tomorrow?'

*I don't advise it, Vitya, Not just now. He will soon be summoningeverybody one at a time on to the carpet. That will be the moment to tell himabout your idea. Only don't tell me anything. I am now nobody and youmustn't tell me anything. After all, I might steal your idea. I need good ideasnow very badly. Aren't you scared?'

'No, I'm not scared.'

'But you ought to be, Suvorov. I'm the same sort of swine as all the rest.Maybe worse. Shall we go and find some tarts?'

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*It's late, Nikolai Tarasovich.'

'Just for a short while. I could show you some super girls! Don't bestand-offish. Come on, let's go.'

Actually I was not against having a look at some girls. Although he thoughtof himself as a real tough, and although he had been mixed up in many dirtyoperations, he was still a decent chap. He was a rare exception among thethousands of two-legged beasts I came across on my way. I was more of a beastthan he was. And my sexual instincts were no weaker than my instinct forself-preservation. But he was drunk, and with him I could have got intotrouble. Trouble that would result in evacuation.

*It's already too late.'

He realised that I wasn't against going to see some girls, and relaxing a httlein their company, but that I wouldn't do it on that occasion. And he didn'targue.

I wanted to think about anything except what was going to happen to me in afew minutes' time on the other side of the armoured door of the Navigator'soffice.

He was very fierce when he was angry, as Nikolai Tarasovich had said. Hewas especially frightening, when he had received a message from Kir inMoscow. On the Navigator's orders, Alexander Ivanovich, the first cipherclerk, had read out the message *from higher up' to our whole crowd. It hadbeen a very stern message.

After that the colonels were called in to be dressed down. Face to face. Andafter that the lieutenant-colonels. The Navigator delivered his judgmentsquickly. Soon it was to be my turn.

Tell me about it.'

* Alpine tourism.'

* Alpine tourism?' The Navigator rose slowly from his chair. *Did you sayAlpine tourism?' He just couldn't stay sitting down. He went quickly from onecorner of the room to another, smiling at something and looking right past me.*Al-pine tour-ism.' He put the first finger of his right hand to his high foreheadand then pointed it at me like a gun. 'I always knew you had a wonderful head.'

He sat back comfortably in his chair with his head on his hand. The orangelight from the lampshade played over his eyes and I felt all the weight of hispowerful brain. Tell me about Alpine tourism,' he said.

'Comrade general, the 6th US Fleet controls the Mediterranean. I realisethat the GRU observes it from Italy, from Washington, from Greece, Turkey,Syria, the Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Spain andFrance, from Malta and Cyprus, from satelhtes and from ships of the 5th

squadron. But we could study the 6th Fleet from the inside as well as from theoutside. Our observation point would be the Austrian Alps. Our experiencewould of course be extended to Switzerland and other countries, but we wouldbe the first. The 6th Fleet is a goldmine. Nuclear aircraft carriers, the latestaircraft, all kinds of missiles, submarines, landing ships, with tanks, artilleryand all the weapons carried by the ground forces. We could find everything inthe 6th Fleet: nuclear warheads, nuclear reactors and all kinds of electronicapparatus....'

He did not interrupt me.

Tor an American a posting to the 6th fleet is an opportunity to look atEurope. Why fly back to America when you could spend a marvellous month'sleave in Austria, Switzerland or France? After a few exhausting months underthe blazing sun snow-covered mountains are exactly what a naval officer needs.'

His eyes shone: * If you had been bom in the wicked world of

capitalism youwould have been a successful businessman. Go on ...'

*I propose a change of tactics. I propose catching the mouse, not when he's inhis hole, but when he comes out of it. I suggest that we do not try to penetratethe especially secret places and do not try to catch some particular mouse. Isuggest we make a mouse-trap. A small hotel in the mountains, which wouldcost us very httle - 300,000 dollars, no more. To put the plan into action I needonly one thing: an agent who has worked for a long time but has now lost hispotential as an agent. I need one of the older men, completely devoted to ourwork, in whom you have confidence. I beUeve you must have older agents whohave gone into "conservation". We will find a little mountain hotel on the vergeof bankruptcy, of which there are quite a few, and we'll breathe new fife into it,introducing our agent as a partner with money. In that way we will save thehotel and put the owner on his feet. When we've collected information aboutthe hotels we'll choose one in which Americans from the 6th Fleet stay mostoften. The hotel would not be a place for recruitment but for studying them. Alightning recruitment could take place later, in another place.'

To use a hotel is a rather passive approach. Somebody may stop there or not.We may have to wait a long time....'

*It's like a fisherman with his line. You have to know where to cast it and whatbait to use.'

'Very well. I order you to gather material about small mountain hotels whichare for sale for any reason. They don't sell them if they are doing well.'

'Comrade general, I have already collected that information. Here it is
'

I was no longer doing back-up work. Everybody knew that. Everybody wastrying to forecast what would happen to me. Would I enjoy such privileges forlong? But it was not difficult to determine my fate. You had only to watch thefirst cipher clerk. He knew everything. All the secrets. He was the barometerby which to judge the mood of our Navigator.

And the first cipher clerk had started addressing me by my first name andpatronymic: Viktor Andreyevich. A message for you, Viktor Andreyevich.Good morning, Viktor Andreyevich. Sign here, Viktor Andreyevich.

It was an amazing change. It had never happened before with the first cipherclerk. He was not an operational officer, but he was closer than anybody to theNavigator. He had the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and he addressed only fullcolonels by their first names and patronymics. He didn't even bother to givethe lieutenant-colonels, majors and captains any rank at all, just: here's amessage for you. No more. Now suddenly he had remembered my name andhad used it in public. It produced complete silence in our main office the firsttime he did it. Looks of amazement were shot in my direction. Seryozha—Twenty-seven'—allowed his jaw to drop.

The first time it happened, the first cipher clerk summoned me to theNavigator:

The Navigator is waiting for you, Viktor Andreyevich."

Afterwards everyone was trying to guess how I had managed to distinguishmyself. I occasionally caught snatches of conversation about me: for example,that I had recruited a Chinese attache! There were all sorts of rumours aboutme. But apart from myself the only ones to know what I was doing were theNavigator, the first cipher clerk and Nikolai Tarasovich Moroz, the formerFirst Deputy. He was no longer drinking, and nobody was joking about him.Earlier, when he had been the First Deputy, he used to say: *I order you!' Thenhe stopped saying anything. Now, as an ordinary operational officer, he hadstarted saying: 'On behalf of the Navigator, I order you!' His voice had begunto ring once again. If he was again issuing orders, that meant that he had thenecessary powers. Once he had begun to speak in that tone, it was clear he felthe had backing.

He had lost the title of First Deputy, which was very important. But therewas something else more important - the Navigator trusted the colonel onceagain and depended on him. Previously the First Deputy had used hisauthority to hold our whole gang in his fist. Now he was doing the same again,only on behalf of the Navigator.

*Comrade general, tomorrow I shall need three men for back-up work, and onSaturday night I shall need five.'

Take them.'

'But who?'

'Arrange it with Nikolai Tarasovich. Whoever's not busy.'

'And if there are only colonels and lieutenant-colonels?'

'Take them too.'

'But who will command them?'

'You command them. On the day the operation is carried out I authorise youto use the formula "On behalf of the Navigator".'

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Thank you, comrade general.'

Nikolai Tarasovich and I were working together. Like two real aces, with awhole squadron of people to protect us.

We were setting up a mouse-trap in the mountains. We were developing abig business. I was not at all displeased with the fact that he had been put on tomy plan, and that I had been made totally responsible to him. He hadexperience and he had a network of agents.

With permission from the Aquarium, the Navigator had taken somesleeping agents out of 'conservation' and posted them to Austria to take part inthe 'Alpine tourism' operation. We had bought not one hotel but three. TheGRU didn't think them dear.

The agents taken out of conservation were divided into three categories: agroup of agents with a direct channel of communication, who could passmessages directly to Vatutinki without exposing us to risk. A few others wereworking under the control of Nikolai Tarasovich. And one was put directlyunder me.

He had previously been known as 173-V-106-299. Now he was called173-V-4I-299. He had been recruited in 1957 in Ireland. He had worked forfive years on intelligence-gathering, but what he had gathered was notrecorded in his case file. Between the lines you could gather that there had beengreat activity but small returns. Then there was a completely obscure passagein his biography. It said simply that he had been put in direct contact with theAquarium and was not responsible to the GRU Navigator in Vienna. Thatperiod ended with his being awarded the Order of Lenin, payment of a hugebonus and his transfer to extended 'conservation' under the control of ourresidency.

During the years of his 'conservation' there were no meetings with him.Now he had been brought out of hibernation into active service again. He hadbeen given some control tasks to carry out. He thought he was already inaction, but in fact he was just being tested. Had he

cooled off? Had he changedhis ideas of his allegiance?

The Navigator is changing course. We all sense it. He has swung the wheelsharply round and is driving our ship through very stormy waters. He is takingchances. He is making the boat heel over, and that is the way to ship a lot ofwater. But he has a strong hand.

Something is changing. Security measures are becoming more intensive.Everybody on back-up work! A different kind of operation was afoot. Makecontact with advertising agencies! Collect material about guides and hotelemployees. All very secret. Make a mistake and you'll finish up in prison.

Make direct contact with advertising agents on the Mediterranean coast. Whaton earth have we gone into the tourist business for?

Operational officers go one after the other into the offices of the Navigator'sdeputies. Then they disappear for several days. To hide a transmitter in themountains. To put money into a hiding place, more and more money. TheNavigator's deputies check up on how the tasks are carried out. What on earthis going on? You can't keep going to the Navigator for advice: he is busy. Donot disturb! But where can a deputy get the right answer? Should one askNikolai Tarasovich Moroz? He is no longer the First Deputy, but he stillknows everything. The deputies crowd into Nikolai Tarasovich's office,though he is no longer entitled to an office. He is nobody, just an officer. Butuntil a new First Deputy arrives

Nikolai Tarasovich is a nobody. But it is better to go to him for advice andlisten to his reproaches than to make a mistake. One mistake and you are forSiberia.

Again everybody is on back-up work round the clock. Night and day.Without any days off, without holidays and without let-up.

ˆNikolai Tarasovich I need someone for back-up work.'

'All right, Alexander Alexandrovich, think of someone.'

Alexander Alexandrovich thought.

'Vitya Suvorov, maybe?'

'No, he can't be used for that.'

'Who, then?' Alexander Alexandrovich, a deputy to the Navigator, had onlyone operational officer in reserve and that is Nikolai Tarasovich Moroz.Alexander Alexandrovich looks across enquiringly at him in the hope that hemight volunteer for the job. There is nobody else to send: they are all out on thejob. But Nikolai Tarasovich remains silent.

'So, what? Do I have to go out on a back-up job myself? I am after all theNavigator's deputy.'

'But why don't you, Alexander Alexandrovich, just for once? If there's noone else to send?'

Alexander Alexandrovich continued to think and at last reaches a conclu-sion: he would send Vitali 'Aeroflot' out twice in a night.

'There you are, you see, and you said there was no one to send.'

Where on earth is the Navigator driving us? Is it wise to heel the ship over sofar? Won't it capsize? No, it won't. We are well trained, from Spetsnaz days.Everybody into action! Alexander Alexandrovich on to back-up work.Watching over the military attache, in a green Mercedes.

We are exhausted and getting dizzy. A mistake, and prison. For everyoperation a plan has to be drawn up. After every operation a report to be made.That is so that it will be easier for the inspectors from the 1st directorate of theGRU to find the culprits.

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In the main office the Hghts are never put out. There is now no point inappointing a duty officer because the place is full of officers at every hour of theday and night.

At a desk to my left Slava from the trade mission, a young captain, is writinga report, covering up his work with his hand. He is right to do it: nobody issupposed to know other people's secrets. And how is Slava to know that I amthe author of the operation he has been on? Or that a week ago the Navigator,Nikolai Tarasovich and I spent the whole night discussing every detail of it.How can Slava know that he has been covering my tail? When he came out onto that clearing in the forest I saw him and saw him quite clearly. But he didn'tsee me, and couldn't do so. He had no right to see me. So let him get on with hiswriting.

Viktor Audreyevich had a headache. His eyes ached too. He was

sitting in anoffice and studying some hotel registers. There were a lot of them, from varioushotels including those that did not belong to us. We had copies of the registersfrom dozens of hotels with tens of thousands of names. It was, of course, onlyhistory. But he who knows the past can make a forecast about the future.Correct or not, that's another question. But it was not possible to know whatthe future held without knowing the present and the past.

There were thousands of hotels in Austria and millions of tourists. If ouragents obtain more registers it would be possible to feed the names into acomputer to make our forecasts. But for the time being we were doing it all byhand.

A group of Japanese tourists - sixteen people. Were they of any interest?Perhaps, only I had no way of finding out. I could not know whether they wereinteresting or not. A pity, but I put them straight among the uninterestingones. Besides, a Japanese tourist never returned to the same place, but wasalways in a hurry to see the whole planet. So I passed over the Japanese.

An EngHsh couple from London. Interesting? No way of knowing. So Ipassed them over too. I went to see Nikolai Tarasovich.

'Look what I've found!'

He looked, nodded his head and clicked his tongue. A single American fromthe little Italian port of Gaeta. What does that name mean to you? What does itmean to anybody? What would it mean to an officer of the KGB? Absolutelynothing. A Uttle fishing village, in which there happened for some reason to bean American. Why? Who cared? No one learning that an American from Gaetahad stopped in a little mountain hotel in Austria would pay the slightestattention to it.

But we were military intelligence officers. Every one of us had started ourservice in an information group or department. Each of us had learnt by heartthousands of numbers and names. For every one of us such names asPirmasens, Penmarch, Oban, Holy Loch, Woodbridge and Zweibrucken had

a heavenly sound. What a joy it was to hear the word Gaeta! That httle villagewas the base for just one naval vessel with the huge number *10' written on itshull. Now do you remember? No? It was the American cruisQV Albany, flagshipof the 6th Fleet. In it were concentrated all the secrets and all the lines ofcontrol. What a wooden

head I had. Why hadn't the idea of having mountainhotels occurred to me a year ago? Quite recently an American from the littleItalian village had stayed in a mountain hotel. He must have been connectedwith the Albany. We did not know who he was, but it was impossible that anAmerican in that God-forsaken village should not know other Americans offthe cruiser. Never mind if he was not the captain, or an officer, or even a sailoron the cruiser. Never mind if he was not connected with the navy. Perhaps hewas a parson, or a seller of pornography. But he would have contact with sailorsoff the cruiser and that was the most important. If only our mouse-trap hadbeen in place a year previously we would certainly have descended on the poorAmerican with all our force.

A mass round-up! Dozens of spies against one victim. The victim senses thaithere are sharks on all sides and that there is no escape for him. Sometimes,when such a mass round-up takes place, with the participation of the entirecontingent, like a wall of a Macedonian phalange, the victim cannot withstandit and commits suicide. More often he agrees to collaborate with us. If we hadknown about the American when he appeared in Austria, the whole irresistiblemight of the GRU would have been thrown at him. And if the Navigator hadasked for help, then the Aquarium might have ordered the resources of severalresidencies to be concentrated on one recruitment. In these cases the victimshouts and struggles, coming up against our people wherever he turns. Hemight phone the police. Never mind, our boys can sometimes dress themselvesup in police uniform. Then they can rescue him and advise him either tocommit suicide or agree to the GRU's proposals. When a whole horde of us areafter one man, the unfortunate victim can phone every imaginable numberand always receive the same reply. Drive him into a corner. Into a dead-end.There are various kinds of corners - physical and moral, financial dead-endsand deadly precipices. Or a man can simply be driven into a corner. A nakedman in the corner of a bathroom. A naked man among those who are clothedalways experiences an uncontrollable feeling of shame and helplessness. Weknow how to drive a man into a corner, how to humiliate him, and how topraise him to the heavens too. We know how to make him throw himself overthe precipice and how to extend a helping hand at the right moment.

*Lost in thought?'

Tes, Nikolai Tarasovich."

'Look what I've found."

I read the entry. A British couple from the little town of Faslane, the Britishsubmarine base. If the couple lived in Faslane it was very probable that theywere connected with the ships. Perhaps he was captain of a ship, or perhaps hesimply worked in security at the base. Perhaps he was just a street sweeper atthe naval base or near it, a milkman or the owner of a public house. Perhaps she

worked in the library, or in the canteen, or in the hospital. Any of thosepositions would do marvellously - they would have contact with the crews,with the repair brigades and with the staff officers. If there were prostitutes atFaslane one could say with certainty that they were connected with the basetoo. And how! Through them it might be possible to obtain secret informationthat even the captains of the subs did not know.

Faslane was too small. Every one of its inhabitants was connected in someway with the base. There's a nuclear submarine base in France, but that is atBrest, a big city in which by no means everybody is connected with subma-rines. That is why we like to seek out very small towns in which there aremilitary establishments of great importance, like Faslane. It would be veryawkward for the GRU's diplomatic residency in London to send its lads toFaslane. The authorities in Great Britain frequently catch our people andthrow them out ruthlessly. You don't even get into your stride. And theappearance of a stranger in a Htde town puts people on their guard. That's whywe were hunting there, in Austria. Among the inhabitants of those htde towns,whose names sound so sweedy in the ears of a military spy.

Night after night Nikolai Tarasovich and I spent going through the hotelregisters. We could only wait and see whether one of those people would returnto the same place a second time. If not we'd find others.

The hotel registers recorded the past. A pity, because you couldn't bring itback. But as we went through the books we obtained a clear idea of the scope ofour future operations.

The Navigator was serious. The Navigator was severe.

*By a decree of the head of the GRU my First Deputy has been appointed.'

We all remained silent.

'Alexander Ivanovich, read out the message.'

Alexander Ivanovich surveyed us with a look which told us nothing,then looked down at a small sheet of thick, bright yellow paper:

Top Secret. I hereby order the appointment of Colonel Nikolai TarasovichMoroz as First Deputy Commander of the diplomatic residency of the GRU173-V. Chief of the General Staff, Marshal of the Soviet Union Ogarkov. Headof GRU Army-General Ivashutin.'

The Navigator was smiling. The first cipher clerk was smiling. And NikolaiTarasovich was smiling. He was again the First Deputy. I was smiling, and sowere my comrades, though not all of them.

With us in the GRU, and also throughout the Soviet Army, in the KGB, andin the whole Soviet system, restoration to power after a fall from grace was avery rare occurrence. It was something like a return from the grave. Very fewever returned. When you fell, you went to the very bottom, onto the rocks.

We went up to the First Deputy and congratulated him. He no longer had tospeak 'on behalf of the Navigator', he was now all-powerful in his own right.

He shook everybody by the hand. But it seemed to me that he had not forgottenthose who had joked at his expense when he had started to have difficulties.And those who had joked also knew that he had not forgotten. He wouldremember. Not now, perhaps. But he would bide his time. Everybody knowsthat the expectation of revenge is worse than the revenge itself. The FirstDeputy was in no hurry.

'Congratulations, Nikolai Tarasovich.' It was my turn to shake his hand. Ashe grasped my hand he looked me straight in the eyes and said quietly. Thankyou.'

Apart from the two of us, only the Leader and the first cipher clerkunderstood the true significance of that 'thank you'. A month previously agent173.V-4I-299, who was now the joint owner of a little hotel and reporting tome, had summoned me to an emergency meeting and informed me that he hada guest from a little town in Belgium, the name of which every GRU officerdreamt of. I ought to have gone over to carry out the recruitment at once. Butinstead I got in touch with the Navigator and refused. I said I couldn't do it,because

I was too inexperienced. For that recruitment I would have had theOrder of the Red Star on my chest or another silver star on my shoulder. And infact I had all the experience necessary. But I refused. The Navigator smiled atme and sent Nikolai Tarasovich instead. And today he was celebrating.

Thank you, Vitya.' The Navigator was shaking my hand now. All thosearound us looked in astonishment, understanding nothing. Why should theNavigator suddenly shake me by the hand? What was he thanking me for? Itwas not my celebration. And the Navigator laid his hand on my shoulder,patted me on the back as if to say: your time will come. I was sorry to havemissed out on the recruitment. At the same time I was pleased for the FirstDeputy, now back on top - very pleased for Nikolai Tarasovich.

The new military attache of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics hasdisappeared. Vanished into thin air. He was here, and now he isn't. He hasbeen called back to Moscow on leave and has not returned. His green Mercedesis standing in the courtyard of the embassy. It is once again waiting for a newmaster.

It's only the lazy who fall sick. Is it really so difficult to get away to the woodsonce a month and put an end to all ills, ward off any threatening ailments? Ihave always managed to find time for that. Even at times of the most unrelievedfootwork. Now and in the past.

I was far away in the mountains. I knew there was no one anywhere near.There were no secret hiding places and no appointments to keep. There wereonly ants - big brown wood ants. This was their kingdom, their city-state. In a

sunny clearing between the fir trees. I took off my clothes and plunged into anant hill, as you do into cold water. There were thousands of them, a hugecrowd, a sort of Shanghai of ants. They ran all over my arms and legs. One hadbitten me painfully and immediately the whole pack of them started biting me.If I stayed there long enough, the would eat me whole. But if I could stand it forjust a minute it was a good treatment, Uke snake venom. A lot meant death, buta little was good for you. There was a good reason why the serpent was thesymbol of medicine. I had never treated myself with snake venom, I don'tknow why. I simply never had the time. But you don't need much time for theants. You just looked for a big ant hill and jumped into it!

The liquid given off by the glands of the ant will preserve anything fromdecay. The ant will bite a caterpillar and drag it into its undergroundstorehouse. The hquid will ensure the dead body does not decay for a year ortwo. It will lie there as if in a refrigerator.

In the case of the living body the effect is miraculous. There will never beany wrinkles or patches on the face. The teeth do not decay. My grandfatherwas ninety-three when he died and he had no wrinkles and practically all histeeth. He lost only three teeth - and they were knocked out by the Reds. He ranaway from them, otherwise he would have lost all his teeth along with his head.

It was not just my grandfather who exploited the secrets of the ant. Thewhole of Russia, and before that the whole of Byzantium, did the same. InEgypt the ant was regarded as the most important doctor. The Egyptiansnoticed, many thousands of years ago, how the ants preserved their foodsupplies and so they started pushing their hands and feet into any heaps. Laterthey would put dead pharaohs into swarms of ants for forty-eight hours, and athousand years later their bodies had still not disintegrated.

Everybody knows that the brown wood ant can work wonders. But mankindis lazy! People buy an acid said to be made from ants in chemists' shops, but itis not genuine. It is made in factories. They rub it into their arms and legs. Butthey are silly. The ant knows where to bite you, and it is important that you arebitten in the right place. The same as with Chinese acupuncture, when theystick needles into you. They have to be in the right place.

I roared like an elk and rushed all over the place at the gallop, brushing theants off me. Thank you very much, my friends, that is enough for one day.

The Friend of the People has disappeared. The Friend of the People is what wecalled the KGB navigator in Vienna. Our principal 'neighbour'. All ourneighbours in the lair of Chekists look very downcast. Something is going onthere. They probably don't know exactly what it is themselves. But the KGBnavigators from Vienna, Geneva, Bonn and Cologne have been summoned toMoscow and for some reason have not returned. Their deputies are in chargefor the time being.

The evacuation of someone is a cruel and irreversible affair. You get a

message from Moscow saying that your father is not well and wants to

see youbefore he dies. So you fly off home with an escort at your side, so that you don'trun away. When you arrive in Moscow you are immediately put underinvestigation. And who isn't guilty of something? We've all done somethingwrong. So long as they've got the man, it is always possible to put together acase against him. True, they don't shoot people nowadays as they did in 1937.Or rather, they shoot people, but not on the same scale.

Where has the Friend of the People gone wrong? How are we to know? Youcan, of course, listen to the rumours. But rumours are put around by a specialservice for the purpose of obscuring the truth.

It often happens like that: you open a business and have breath-taking success.But not for long. The same thing was happening with our commercialenterprises. No sooner had we opened for business than we had a fabuloussuccess - a recruitment, for which the First Deputy was pardoned for hisearlier failure.

The First Deputy, along with a group of supporting officers, was obtainingsecret information for which Colonel-general Zotov, the head of GRU Infor-mation, sent enthusiastic messages of thanks.

But just as a milhonaire does not have enough money and never will haveenough, or a collector is always short of just one tarnished coin, there willalways be something lacking. The General Staff will never have enough secretinformation about the enemy, however much of it you obtain. There alwaysremains something which is not absolutely clear about the enemy's position,about his plans and his armament. The only time when the InformationService of the GRU uses the word *enough' is when the information you supplyis inferior in quality. Then they have very soon had enough of your infor-mation, and of you too.

Our mountain hotels were not yet yielding the desired results. Results werenot easy to achieve. Every month people turned up in the little hotel fromplaces with such strange names as Minot and Offutt. Our agents in the touristbusiness had received lists of names of places in which practically everyinhabitant must have been connected with military establishments of except-ional importance. But there were no results so far. One fish had landed in thenet and that was all. And I had, voluntarily, let the First Deputy have it. I hadbeen more important for him to register a success at the time. But nothing hadcome my way.

Messages from the Aquarium sounded slightly annoyed. Why don't

you putnumber 41 on to back-up work? After all, he admitted himself that he was notready to work independently.

203

Our neighbours, the Friends of the People, were having a big celebration.Some years previously an officer had defected from a Soviet naval vessel, andmany KGB residencies had been hunting him down. But it was the diplomaticresidency in Vienna that succeeded. It had achieved an astonishing feat andtaken him back.

Well, good luck to them. They had certainly learnt how to kidnap people.But why did they not succeed in stealing any American atomic secrets, and whyhad they never provided Soviet industry with the plans of French anti-tankmissiles, or of British torpedoes, or of German tank engines?

*Viktor Andreyevich, there's a signal for you.'

I pushed my coffee cup to one side, put my papers into my briefcase, and mybriefcase into the safe. Then the key into the small safe. The combination hadbeen changed today - one had to remember it.

'Let's go.'

The fourth cipher clerk went ahead and I followed. Down the concretestairway to the bunker. He pressed a button, the door chcked and could thenbe opened. We were in a small concrete chamber. The walls were white, with arough surface, and still bore the imprints of the boards which had been used toretain the concrete when the bunker was constructed. The doors were shut.We were being observed by closed-circuit television cameras. The cipher clerkclosed the entrance door firmly: it looked like a watertight bulkhead in asubmarine. The cipher clerk reached behind a curtain and dialled a number. Icould not see his hand and had no right to. They said that if you dialled thewrong number a clamp seized your hand. I don't know whether this was true orjust a cipher clerk's joke. Intelligence officers are not allowed to know theirsecrets.

The security inside the bunker was at last satisfied that we were okay, andthe main door moved slowly and smoothly aside. Inside was Petya 'Spetsnaz\who waved us in. The KGB staffs its internal security force with officers of thefrontier units, but the GRU uses officers from its Spetsnaz brigades. It thuskills two birds with one stone. It has a thoroughly reliable security force and atthe same time it can drive the Spetsnaz men around the country from time totime to inspect the

places where they may drop by parachute, the secret hidingplaces, the places where they can take cover, and the pohce stations.

The GRU's diplomatic residency in Vienna was protected by Spetsnazofficers of the 6th Guards Tank Army, trained to fight in the mountains andwith special traditions. It had crossed the Great Khingan range in Manchuriaon its way to the Pacific Ocean. It had travelled 800 kilometres across territorywhich all the experts considered to be impassable for tanks. The 6th GuardsTank Army was now in training for carrying out a hghtning dash across Austriaup the undefended left bank of the Rhine towards the North Sea. Comparedwith the Khingan, the Austrian Alps were of course just hillocks. But they had

to be dealt with properly. That was why Spetsnaz from that Army werepermanently stationed in Vienna. They had to move forward. They had toclear the way with their sharp knives.

*Good morning, Viktor Andreyevich,' Petya greeted me.

*Good morning, you scoundrel. Getting lazy in the bunker?'

*0n the contrary, I'm getting wild.' Petya grinned. *I haven't seen a bit ofskirt for six months now. Even at a distance.'

*Bear up. It's worse in submarines.'

I walked down a corridor and past a number of steel doors. The corridor washung with dozens of heavy curtains, so that you couldn't tell how long it was,whether it divided after the next curtain or turned off in another direction. Wewere not allowed to know. The door to the signals room was the first on the left.

It was a room with a low ceiling, also hung with curtains. The curtains maybe there in case of fire, as they say, but it also means that, having been in theroom, I have no idea how much signals apparatus there are.

One curtain had been pulled aside in anticipation of my arrival. Behind itwas a grey box on which was carefully written: Transmitted by 299, receivedby 41'. The cipher clerk put his key into the machine, turned it and left theroom. I inserted my own key, turned it and opened a htde steel door. Inside itwere rows of little green lamps. One of them, with the number 83 on it, was on.I pressed a button and the

lamp went out. At the same time the lamp over mysignals apparatus also went out. That told the cipher clerk that a signal hadbeen received. But he was not entitled to know what the signal was: only I wasto know that. That was the number 83. Even if the clerk had known that I hadreceived the signal 83 from agent 173-V-4I-299, how could he know what itmeant?

Signal 83 meant that agent 173-V-4I-299 wanted to get in touch with me. Thenumber 83 meant that contact—but not direct, personal contact—should takeplace on the first Saturday after receipt of the signal, between 4:30 and 4:45 inthe morning. And the place: the Attersee near Salzburg.

Agent 299 had a great variety of signals and could summon us for personal ornon-personal contact at any moment. Every form of contact had been workedout down to the smallest detail and each one had its own number. Number 83was the code for a complete plan with various alternatives and reservearrangements.

The best guarantee of the GRU's own security is the fact that it keeps thenumber of meetings with valuable agents to a minimum and if possible to nil. Ihad been working for ten months with agent 299, but had never set eyes on himand never would. Indirect Cnon-personal') meetings with him took place twoor three times a month, but I discovered from his fije that in the course oftwenty-one years' work with the GRU he had only had six face-to-facemeetings and had met personally only two GRU officers. This was a correct

procedure. The fact that there were no face-to-face meetings protected ouragents from our mistakes and our officers from shocking failures and sensa-tional pictures on the front pages of newspapers.

With a non-personal meeting, a GRU officer and his agent might be dozensof kilometres apart from one another. Neither would know where his contactwas. We wouldn't use radio or telephone for transmitting or exchanginginformation. We'd use water or sewage pipes; sometimes two telephones mightbe connected to a metal fence or a barrier of barbed wire. Such 'contactsections', would be selected in advance and tested by our officers.

But for contact with valuable agents the GRU usually made use of water.The poHce could monitor the ether, but water was the best conductor of signalsand much less open to interception. If ever the

pohce start to monitor allreservoirs, rivers, lakes, seas and oceans, then the GRU will go over to othermeans of maintaining contact with agents. Its Institute of Communicationswill have thought up something by then.

There were drops of dew on my boots as I made my way through the tall wetgrass towards the lake. The fir trees surrounded the lake like a solid fence. Asohd wall. The silence was total. I had to avoid stepping on dry twigs. Whymake a noise? Noise was an offence to this clean water, the crystal transparencyof the sky and the pink mountain peaks above. It would always be quiet there.Even when the GRU's Spetsnaz arrived, there would be no tramp of soldiers'boots to break the silence, because the soft footwear of the Spetsnaz didn'tmake a noise like the nailed boots of an infantry man. Later the 6th GuardsTank Army would pass through. That would mean the rumble and roar oftanks, but only for a short time. Peace would be restored, and a cosy littleconcentration camp on the banks of the lake would not upset it. Perhaps Iwould be in charge of the camp, or perhaps just an inmate along with the localsocialists and peace fighters. That's the way it has always been. Those who arethe first to welcome the Red Army or want to talk peace with it are also the firstto fall under its blows.

The whole earth was flooded by the dawn. It seemed delighted to welcomethe sunrise. All living things rejoiced, ready to meet the surging waterfall oflight which would come rushing from behind the mountain tops very soonnow. Then the bird-song would rise up in a hymn to welcome the day. But forthe moment all was still silent. The little diamond droplets were not yetsparkling, the pure gold was not yet running down the mountainsides, and thebreeze had not yet carried down the scent of wild flowers. Nature had fallensilent in that last moment before it exploded in delight, joy and new life.

Who was there to admire it? Only I - Vitya the spy. And my agent, known asNo. 299. He would be making his way to the lake from a quite differentdirection. I wondered whether he understood the poetry of nature? Could helisten for hours to its faint sounds? Did he realise that he and I together were

making preparations for the construction of a little concentration camp on thesloping bank of the lake? Did the old man realise that he and I might becomeinmates of that most picturesque little camp? Did it ever occur to him thatthose who work very close to the mouth of the meat-grinder find themselves init more often that ordinary

mortals? Did it ever pass through his wooden headthat by a trick of fate his camp number might be very similar to his number asan agent? Of course he didn't understand any of this. I had nowhere else toturn. I had been born and brought up in the system, and there was no escape.But he was helping us voluntarily, the scoundrel. If the Communists didn'ttrick me up against a wall and shoot me, I thought, if they didn't burn me in acrematorium or drown me in an overcrowded barge, but put me in charge of aconcentration camp, I would set aside a special section for such volunteersupporters and forget to feed them. Let them eat each other first. As rats in aniron barrel eat the weakest first and then the progressively stronger ones.... Iwould let them establish each day who was the weakest. Let each of them bescared of falling asleep, lest he should be killed and eaten while he slept.Perhaps they would understand then that there is and can be no harmony onthis earth. That everyone is obliged to fight for himself. My God, if they wouldonly put me in charge of a camp.

It was time to act. I cast my Une into the lake. It was very similar to anordinary fishing Hne. The only difference was that you could pull out of thehandle a short lead and connect it to your watch. The watch was in turnconnected by wire to a little grey box. There was another lead going from thewatch up my sleeve and into an inside pocket. The face of my rather originalwatch lit up and a minute later the light went out. That meant that thetransmission had been received and was recorded on the thin wire of myrecorder. The waves carrying the signals did not spread through the ether. Thesignals spread only within the limits of the lake and not beyond it. The messagehad been recorded well in advance on a tape-recorder and was transmitted athigh speed. It was therefore extremely difficult to intercept an agent's messageeven if you knew in advance the time and place of the transmission and thefrequency used. Without that, interception was impossible.

I pretended to be winding up my watch. The face lit up for a moment andthen went out: the reply had been transmitted. Time to get off home.

Chapter Thirteen

*Comrade general, I have been in touch with 299 by a water contact. Heinforms us that there are not likely to be any guests at his hotel in the next fewmonths from places that interest us.'

That's bad.'

*But 299 is not wasting his time. He has estabhshed friendly relations withthe owners of neighbouring hotels and sometimes, on some pretext or other, hehas an opportunity of looking at their reservation list.'

Tou don't think that's dangerous?' The Commander knew that it was notdangerous, but he was obliged to put the question.

'No, comrade general, it's not dangerous. 299 is very smart and experienced. And he tells us that in a nearby hotel' -1 took a piece of paper and wrotedown the name of the hotel, because I did not have the right to say aloud anydates, addresses, names of places or people. Even in 'safe' rooms we had towrite such things down on paper, sometimes saying aloud some dates or nameshaving nothing to do with the case —'in a nearby hotel a room has already beenreserved for a man.' Again I wrote the name down. 'Two years ago he stayed inan hotel which now belongs to us. We've got a certain amount of informationabout him and even a photograph, though not a very clear one. His hobby ismountain climbing, for which he travels to Austria and possibly also toSwitzerland. He works in Spain, in a town called ..."

I laid a piece of paper in front of me and with a gesture of triumph inscribedthe name in big letters: 'Rota'.

He looked at me, scarcely daring to beUeve his eyes. Then I wrote down onceagain that short but fascinating name, which every inteUigence office dreamt ofand which sounded so crystal clear to every one of us: 'Rota'!

The general laughed. I laughed too. In the world there are hundreds ofplaces in which we are interested. Any one of them would be a real find for usand would mean that fate was smiling on us. But I had had a real bit of luck -'Rota'!

'Shall I check your knowledge?' he asked with a laugh. He was joking, ofcourse, because you couldn't be a GRU officer without knowing the mainfeatures of that base. At hearing the word Rota the brain of any officer of theGRU reacts like a computer and begins to produce short phrases and precisefigures: water area - twenty-five square kilometres; harbour protected bybreakwater of 1500 metres; three piers, each 350 metres long; depth of water atpiers - twelve metres; ammunition store - 8000 tons; storage for petroleum

products - 300,000 tons; aerodrome - one runway of 4000 metres. As for thefact that it was a base for American nuclear submarines—everybody knewthat.

The Navigator strode round the office, rubbing his hands.

* Write a request.'

*Very well.'

A man from the little Spanish village of Rota. I knew nothing at all about him.It wasn't even clear if he was an American or a Spaniard. But I made myˆrequest'. The next day that request would be fed into the GRU's bigcomputer, which would tell us everything it knew about him.

The GRU's big computer was the produce of the creative genius ofAmerican engineers and had been sold to the Soviet Union by short-sightedAmerican politicians. America received milHons for the big computer, but lostbillions. The big computer knew everybody and was very clever. It wouldswallow down a colossal quantity of data about the whole population of theearth. It had a voracious appetite. It could devour whole telephone books, listsof university graduates and of employees of an astronomical number of firms.It was insatiable. It would take in millions of newspaper cuttings about birthsand deaths. But that was not its only nourishment. It had access to vastquantities of secret documents. It was the business of every one of us in theGRU to see that that voracious American offspring was never hungry.

Perhaps the information about the man from Rota would be disjointed,inadequate. Perhaps the big computer would give us no more than his date ofbirth, perhaps the date when his name first appeared in a secret telephonedirectory, and perhaps the name of the bank in which he kept his money. Buteven these disconnected pieces of information would be quite sufficient for theGRU command point to despatch some messages to places where it might bepossible to obtain some more facts about him. Some of our Borzois might rundown his parents, his school friends, or his birthplace. So that when I met upwith him in a little hotel on the shores of a lake I would know more about himthan he thought. I hoped I would soon meet him. For the sake of conveniencehe had already been given the number 713 or, in full, 173-V-4I-713. Thatwould let everybody who was entitled to know that the man in charge of him wasintelligence officer Forty-one of the

Vienna diplomatic residency of the GRU.

Time was flying past like an express train, deafening you and hurling you backfrom the rails. Once again, day and night ran together into a sort of black andwhite whirlpool. There was a transit case from the Lebanon; establishment ofcontact with some people recruited in South Africa; an impersonal contactwith some invisible 'friend' recruited by goodness knows whom; back-up for

undercover operators; and another transit for Ireland. Both the Navigator andthe First Deputy refused to let me be diverted on to unimportant jobs. But fartoo often there were especially important jobs, like backing up illegals or alarge-scale operation, when everybody had to take part, including the Naviga-tor's deputies. Then nobody was given special treatment. Everybody had to beinvolved, even twice in a single night. Receiving a transit case from France.Another from Honduras. Don't you reahse how important it is?

Suddenly the wheel stopped turning. Leafing through my diary, coveredwith entries, suddenly I came across an almost empty page, with only one entryon it: 'Work with 713.' And that referred to that very day when I was sitting inmy chair, my head still buzzing round with thoughts of meetings anddead-letter boxes and non-personal meetings.

I looked at that brief entry for a long time, then picked up the telephone and,without dialling any number, asked:

'Conurade general, could you possibly spare me a few minutes?'

'Won't it wait till tomorrow?'

'I have already been trying to see you for several days.' I was lying, because Iknew he had no time to check up on me. 'But today is the last day.'

'What do you mean - the last day?'

'Not even the last, comrade general, but the first.'

'Listen, damn you, I can't at the moment. But come and see me in half anhour. If there's somebody waiting to see me, tell them to go to hell in my name.Got it?'

'I've got it.'

Later, I gave the Navigator the route I proposed to take and the tricks Iintended to resort to to throw the poHce off my tail. And I reported everything Inow knew about 713.

'All right, then. That's not bad. I wish you luck.'

He stood up, smiled at me and shook me by the hand. The third time in fouryears.

The roads were jammed with hohday-makers, and I was in a hurry. I wascounting on getting to the hotel by late afternoon so as to leave the evening freefor putting my plan into action. I had been driving down the main road for fivehours. From time to time I had been held up by enormous traffic jams, but assoon as the road was clear I pressed on as fast as the car would go, overtakingeverybody on the way. As the sun began to set I left the highway and took to anarrow mountain road, without reducing my speed. A white Mercedesappeared around a corner and there was a screech of brakes and a cloud of dustas it left the hard road for the edge. The driver dazzled me with his fights,deafened me with his horn. A woman in the back of the Mercedes pointed afinger to her temple to tell me I was out of my mind. I didn't need her to tell methat. A touch on the brakes on the corner; they screamed in protest; the car

swung across to the wrong side of the road; I took my foot off the brake andpressed the accelerator down to the floor. I was darned sure they didn't get mynumber: they didn't have time to see it. I was already round the corner, handsfirmly on the wheel. Even if I had gone over the edge I wouldn't have let go.Meanwhile the car was making noises to indicate that it didn't approve of thetreatment I was giving it. At the first crossroads I took to a really narrow roadthrough a dark forest. A long scramble uphill, followed by a long descent, deepinto a mountain valley. Then the road began to get wider. I needed no map: Ihad a good idea of that part of the country and could guide myself by the settingsun, now crimson. Its jagged edge was already touching the line of trees on thehorizon.

It was already quite dark when I arrived at the hotel. It was situated on theshore of a forest lake at the foot of a long mountain slope. In winter, no doubt,the place was full of brightly coloured ski-suits. But now, in the sunmier, therewas just peace and quiet. Cold air was

coming down from the mountainsideand someone had covered the lakeside meadow with a soft coverlet of whitemist. But I had no time to admire the beauties of nature. I went straight to myroom on the second floor. At first I couldn't get my key into the keyhole. Butthen I took myself in hand, opened the door, threw my suitcase into a cornerand gave myself a shower. I was really dirty after a day's driving. Once I hadfreshened up and restored my circulation with a rough towel, I put on a suit,freshly cleaned and pressed, and tied a brightly coloured scarf round my neck.A glance in the mirror told me that I had far too tense a look on my face - therewas a leaden look in my eyes and my hps were tightly pursed - when I ought tobe wearing an expression of carefree happiness. I did my best. And sodownstairs, though not too quickly. People would never believe that this wasone of the most exhausting days in my very demanding fife, in which I knewneither high days nor holidays. And let no one think my working day was over:there was much more to come.

In the hall downstairs a band was playing, loud and fast. Bright lights playedon the walls, on the ceiling and on the faces of the happy people who wereexpending their energies for the sake of amusement. Suddenly the sound of atrumpet rose above the whirlpool of noise, deafening everyone with its wail,while the rhythm of the band held the whole crowd in its power. The beat ofthe music was echoed in the crystal glasses standing on the tables.

On my hand I felt the cold of a glass which I raised, flashing and sparkling, infront of me and smelt its sharp aroma, and at that moment the whole ragingstorm of noise and fight was caught in it. Smiling at the dancing bubbles, I hidmy face behind the glass and cast my eyes slowly round the hall, trying not toreveal the tension I felt. I finally caught sight of him out of the corner of my eye- the man who featured in the green file as No. 713.1 had seen him only oncebefore, and then only in a small snapshot. But I recognised him all right. I

lowered the glass slowly to my lips, suppressed my smile, caught a whiff of theintoxicating smell, and just as slowly turned my face in his direction. At thesame time he turned towards me and our eyes met. I put on an expression ofpleasant surprise and greeted him with a gesture of recognition. Taken aback,he looked around, but found no one behind him. Then he looked at me againwith the unspoken question: who are you signalUng to? To you! - I replydumbly- who else? Then, pushing the dancers aside and carrying my glass highabove my head like a torch of freedom, I made my way across to

him.

*Hello! I never expected to meet you here. Do you remember that marvel-lous evening we had in Vancouver?'

I've never been to Canada.'

'Oh, I'm sorry,' I said, embarrassed and looking closely into his face.There's such bad lighting here and you are so like someone I used toknow Please forgive me.'

I made my way back to the bar, and for the next twenty minutes I watchedthe dancers. I tried to follow the simpler movements: there has never been timein my life for dancing. But as soon as I felt a pleasant warmth spreadingthrough my body I joined the dancing throng.

The longer I danced the better my body performed the required twists andturns, or so it seemed to me. Anyway, no one paid any attention to me. Thehappy crowd welcomed everyone and forgave everything.

I've no idea when he left. It was very late when I went upstairs, among thelast to leave.

The alarm clock woke me early next morning, but I lay in bed for a long time,my face buried in the pillow. I was suffering for a chronic lack of sleep. Fivehours of sleep cannot make up for months of insomnia.

Then I made myself hop out of bed, put in fifteen minutes of painfulgymnastics, and then submit to the torture of a shower alternately boiling hotand freezing cold. Anyone who does that regularly looks fifteen years youngerthan his age. But that wasn't what I was after. I had to look cheerful and full oflife, as befitted an idle layabout.

I went downstairs before anyone else and set about reading the morningpapers, assuming as careless an air as I could.

First to arrive for breakfast were an elderly American couple. Then therewas a woman of uncertain age and uncertain nationality with a stupid andunusually aggressive little dog. Next appeared a group of grinning Japanesefestooned with cameras. And then he appeared. I smiled and nodded to him.He recognised me and nodded back.

After breakfast I went back to my room. The cleaner had not yet been

in. Ihung the 'Do not disturb' notice on the door, let down the blinds and stretched

myself out on the bed with a feeling of great relief. I had long dreamt ofenjoying such a day with nothing to do in a hurry. I tried to recall all the detailsof the previous day, but I got no further than having a bhssful smile on my face.I was probably still smiling when I fell asleep.

That evening I again danced my feet off with all the others. He sat in thesame place as before, alone. When I caught sight of him I smiled and winked,inviting him to join the madding crowd. He smiled and shook his head.

In the morning I was the first down to the breakfast room. He was the second.

*Good morning,' I said, offering him the morning papers.

'Good morning,' he replied with a smile.

The front pages of the papers were full of news about Idi Amin, thepresident of Uganda. We exchanged a few brief comments, smiled at eachother and went in to breakfast. It was most important now not to frighten him.I could of course have already taken the bull by the horns, but I had severaldays to play with, so I chose to make the 'smooth contact'. There was a greatdeal that we did not know about the man, and even watching him at a distancefor a few days would provide a lot of useful information. He was alone, he didnot chase after women, he did not throw his money about but did not count thedollars, and he was a cheerful fellow. This last fact was very important, becausegloomy types were the worst to recruit. He didn't get drunk but drankregularly. He read a lot of books. He watched and listened to the latest news.He understood and appreciated a joke. He dressed smartly but did notoverdress. He wore no articles of jewellery. His hair was not always neatlycombed - and that was enough to tell you something about his inner self. Hisjaws were often tightly closed - a sure sign of self-control, discipline andstrength of will. Such a person was difficult to recruit but easy to work withlater. Quietly, for a long time, I studied his facial expression. I particularlyneeded to know all about his eyes: they were spaced wide apart and large; hiseyelids did not droop and he had little bags under his eyes. His pupils movedslowly from one position to another and remained fixed in one

place for a longtime. He lowered his eyeUds slowly and would raise them just as slowly. Hewould look long at something but not always attentively. More often than not itwas an absent look rather than a penetrating one. In the study of a man'scharacter special attention is given to the muscles of his mouth in varioussituations: in a smile, in anger, in annoyance or when relaxed. But even a smilecan be condescending, scornful, contemptuous, happy, ironical or sarcastic;there's the smile of a winner and the smile of a loser, the smile of someone whohas landed in an awkward situation and a threatening smile, nearer to a grin.But in all these situations the muscles play a part. The way those muscles workis a mirror put to the person's soul. And all those details are much moreimportant than a knowledge of his financial and official difficulties, even ifthese are useful too.

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When it was dark I threw a rucksack into my car along with thigh boots andfishing rods and set off for a distant lake to fish. At dawn the First Deputyemerged from the reeds, sat alongside me and cast a line into the water. Therewas nobody about, the water was warm just before the dawn and a slight mistwas rising from it, pink from the rays of the rising sun, though the sun was stillnot visible.

The First Deputy loathed fishing. He was particularly upset by the fact thatthere were people in the world who were willing to handle worms. He simplycouldn't touch them. It was another matter if he was ordered to. But he was thesenior of us, and in any case there was no need for him to take them in his hands.He cast the line in with an empty hook. He was terribly tired. His eyes werebloodshot and his face grey. For the sake of having a brief meeting with me hehad obviously spent the whole night at the wheel. Yet he had plenty of his ownimportant business to do. He just couldn't stop yawning as he hstened to me. Atthe end of my story he stopped yawning and even gave me a little smile.

*It's all going well, Viktor.'

'Do you think I'll be able to recruit him?'

For the third time in my life I was favoured with the sort of look that a tiredteacher bestows on an unusually stupid pupil. My teacher rubbed his bloodshoteyes and said: 'Listen, Suvorov, there's something you don't seem to under-stand. In this sort of business you must never ask permission. If you ask me forit I shall refuse. One day you will

become a First Deputy of even a Navigator,but just remember that even then you must never ask anyone for permission todo something. If you send a request to the Aquarium the reply will always cometoo late, if only for technical reasons. I may know a great deal about your man,but I cannot/^e/ what he's like. You speak to him directly, and your intuitionalone is what will help you. In this situation neither I nor the Navigator nor theAquarium wish to assume the responsibility themselves. If you don't succeedin recruiting the man, it's your mistake for which you will not quickly be for-given. If you slip up and get arrested during the recruitment, that will also notbe forgiven. Everything depends on you alone. If you decide to go ahead andyou recruit the man, then it will be your medal, you will receive the praise, itwill be your success and your career. And we shall then back you up. Remem-ber that the Aquarium will always be in the right. And remember that theAquarium is always on the side of those who are successful.

Tf you break the rules and get into difficulties you will end up before a GRUtribunal. If you keep carefully to the rules but have a failure, again it is you whowill be to blame, on the grounds that you appUed the rule book too dogmati-cally. But if you are successful, everybody will back you up and forgive youeverything, including breaches of our most important rules, on the groundsthat you apphed the rules in a creative and flexible manner, ignoring out-of-date and obsolete rules.'

'If you're sure of success, go ahead and recruit the chap. If you are not sure,then drop it for the moment. Every officer dreams of such a chance. But it's upto you.'

Tm going to recruit him.'

That's different talk. So just remember: neither I nor the Navigator, nor theAquarium approve your intentions. We simply know nothing about them. Ifyou get into difficulties we shall say that you are a stupid young man whoexceeded his authority and that you deserve to be posted to the space centre atPlesetsk.'

*I understand.'

Then I wish you well.'

So as to look like a real angler he took a few of the fish I had caught anddisappeared into the reeds.

It was evening and I was having a drink with No. 713. He had no idea that hehad long ago been allotted a number, that the big computer had devoted specialattention to him, that quite a number of GRU officers were gathered aroundthe mountain hotel, and that the Aquarium had sent one of the GRU's leadingpsychologists, who had analysed a short film that I had taken. But 713 was notto know that the movements of his face muscles had been studied by some ofthe most successful psychiatrists in the secret world of intelligence.

We were drinking and laughing and talking about all sorts of things. I beganto talk about the weather, about money, about women, about success andpower, about the preservation of peace and the prevention of a major nuclearcatastrophe. There had to be some subject on which he had strong views andwould begin to talk about. It was most important that he should talk more thanI did. I needed a key to loosen his tongue, a subject that interested him. Wewent on drinking and laughing. Then the key was found. He was interested insharks. Had I seen the film Jaws? Not yet, I said. Ah, what a film! The shark'sjaws appear on the screen when the audience least expects them. Terrificeffect. We laughed again. He began describing the habits of the shark for

me an amazing creature.... more laughter. He then tried to guess my

nationahty. Greek? Yugoslav? A mixture of Czech and Italian? Or of Turk andGerman? 'No', I said, 'I am a Russian.' More laughter. Then what on earth areyou, a Russian, doing here?' 'Oh, I'm a spy!' Tou've come to get me into yournetwork?' Tes,' I said, and we both laughed till our sides ached.

Then he suddenly stopped laughing.

'Are you really Russian?'

Tes, I am.'

'And are you really a spy?'

'Yes, I am.'

'And you are out to recruit me?'

'Yes, it's you I'm after.'

'Do you know all about me?'

'Not everything. But something.'

He remained silent for a long time.

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*Has our meeting been recorded on film, and are you planning to blackmailme?'

*Our meeting has been filmed, but I do not intend to blackmail you. Perhapsthat doesn't fit in with what is written in spy stories, but blackmail has neveryielded positive results and so it is not used. At any rate in my service.'

Tour service is the KGB?'

*No. TheGRU.'

*I never heard of it.'

'So much the better.'

'Listen, Russian, I swore an oath not to give any secret information toforeign states.'

Tou don't have to give any secrets to anybody.'

Then what do you want from me?' He had obviously never met a real spy,and quite simply he found it interesting to talk to me.

'You could write a book.'

'What about?'

'About submarines at the Rota base.'

'You know I'm from that base?'

'That's why I'm recruiting you and not the people at the next table.'

Again we laughed.

'It seems to me a bit like in a film.'

'It's always like that. I also never thought I should fetch up in intelligence.Anyway, good night. Waitress, the bill please.'

'Wait a minute, Russian -1 write a book and what then?'

'I pubUsh the book in the Soviet Union.'

'In a million copies?'

'No. Just forty-three.'

'That's not many.'

'We pay you 17,000 dollars for each copy. We do not sign any contract withyou. We pay ten per cent immediately. The rest immediately on receipt of themanuscript, if, of course, it throws some light on matters which interest ourreaders. Later on the book might be published in Enghsh. If there are thingswhich might not be of interest to the Western reader, that could be left out ofthe American edition. So there would be no handing-over of secrets. Justfreedom of the press and nothing more. People write not only about subma-rines but even about the CIA. And nobody brings them to court for that.'

'And they are all paid by you as well?'

'Only some of them.'

I paid the bill and went up to my room to get some sleep.

Chapter Fourteen

It is a very pleasant, even a unique feeling that you experience when you returnto your own strongly protected base after having been out on your ownrecruiting an agent.

My absence for a week had been noticed by our whole crowd of officers. If anintelligence officer was away for three days, it was obvious that he had beenbacking up someone else. But if he was away for more than a week? Where hadhe been? Everybody knew that he must have been recruiting someone.

As I walked down the corridor our whole company of spies made way for me,falling silent as I approached. I had to bite my hps to stop myself from smiling.I was not supposed to smile before receiving the Navigator's congratulations.It was not good behaviour.

My colleagues also observed the traditions. Nobody asked me awkwardquestions, nobody smiled at me and nobody congratulated me. You were notsupposed to congratulate anybody before the

Navigator did so. Of course,nobody knew what to congratulate me for, though everybody realised thatthere was some good reason. Everybody sensed that I was now riding high,everyone could see a crown sparkling with diamonds on my head.

It was very pleasant to know that nobody was envious of me. There wasunderstanding and respect and rejoicing. And there was pride in me and in allof us. There goes Vitya over the red carpet right into the general's office, andwe are glad for him, for we have also walked over that carpet, or if not then weshall cross it in just as proud and dignified a manner.

The band of spies watched me and made way for me. Everybody seemedquite happy and relieved that I had returned and had not landed in trouble, hadnot been caught or tied up, not buried like a bear in hibernation or hounded bydogs like a wolf.

The door of the Navigator's office opened at my approach. The Navigatorhimself greeted me on the threshold. All very simple. He stepped aside andinvited me in: come in, Viktor Andreyevich. On the surface nothing hadchanged, yet such treatment was very unusual. And then, when in the totalsilence someone gave a deep sigh, the Navigator turned and laughed. And withhim everybody laughed at that honest sigh.

The rules of the GRU categorically forbid anything about the work of oneofficer to be revealed to other officers, about either successes or failures.Navigators keep strictly to the rules. They know that no one should know morethan he needs to know to carry out his duties. But in that case, how was it

possible to maintain an atmosphere of fierce competition inside the secretorganisation? That was why residents devised all sorts of tricks to evade therules and to demonstrate to the whole company their approval of some peopleand their dissatisfaction with others. They always found ways of doing it.

In my case, immediately behind me there appeared in the corridor the sixthcipher clerk in white gloves carrying a silver ice-bucket with a bottle ofchampagne in it.

The whole company greeted the appearance of the ice-bucket and thestarched napkins with a murmur of approval. The boss had found a good wayof getting round the rules. And see what heights Vitya

Suvorov, the scoundrel,had soared to. He was really on his way up. The young Borzois' eyes shone asthey spoke of my take-off. But the older - and wiser - officers shook theirheads. They knew that the moment of success was the most difficult in the lifeof an operational officer. Success was preceded by a savage straining of one'sresources and a superhuman concentration of attention at every word, everystep and every breath. In the course of recruiting someone an officer summoned up all his willpower, his character and his knowledge to strike the blowat his victim, and at that moment of greatest tension and concentration of willagainst the person being recruited he had to be aware of everything going onaround him.

Success meant relaxation, and a sudden relaxation of tension could end incatastrophe, breakdown, hysteria, deep depression, crime and even suicide.The older officers are wise enough to know that.

The Navigator knew too. That was why he was both happy and severe. Hepointed to some non-existent mistakes of mine and warned me not to overdothe rejoicing. But how could I not rejoice? No. 713 had agreed. He had takenthe money. And he had gone away with a Ust of questions which had to be dealtwith in the book. (In the American edition many of those details might beomitted.) He had taken the ten per cent and was in our hands. He would soonspend the 73,000 dollars and would then want to get hold of the rest.Experience had taught the GRU that there were a lot of people who were keento get the ten per cent and do no more. But every one of them, once having hada taste of money for which they worked and risked Uttle, did the jobconscientiously and received the remainder. There were no exceptions to thatrule.

I was not sure why it was, but success did not give me any great pleasure. Thosefolk are probably right who say that you experience happiness only as you arescrambling up to success. As soon as you achieved it you no longer felt happy.There were very few happy people among those who had achieved success.There were many more of them among the ragged and dirty, the hungryvagrants, than among film stars or leading pohticians. And there were moresuicides among world-famous writers and poets than among street cleaners.

I felt bad, and I didn't know why. I was now ready for anything. I wonderedwhy nobody ever tried to recruit us. If only an American diplomat would comeup to me now and say: 'Hey, you, let me recruit you!' I would say yes. I wouldhonestly say yes. He would be terribly

surprised, knowing the habits of theGRU. Listen, you fool, my American friend would say, do you realise what'swaiting for you if this falls though? I know, I would reply cheerfully. *Comeon, recruit me, you damned capitalist. I'll work for you without pay. Every-thing the American intelligence service gives me, I'll stick into your pocket!I simply want to risk my neck.' Isn't it exhilarating to walk along the edge of aprecipice, to dice with death? After all there are idiots who try to ride buckingbroncos and who dance about in front of bulls. Not for money, for thepleasure.

Come on, recruit me, my enemies! I'll go along with you.

Why don't you say something?

Screening, screening, and yet more screening. We were sick and tired of thecontinual screening.

It was easy to check up on the background of the friends we had recruited.They were continually being monitored by the Information Service, without,of course, its knowing their names, histories or the jobs they had. The samequestion could be dealt with by someone who was thousands of kilometresaway from the matter in which the GRU was interested: information about theplans of the German General Staff could come from Geneva, but also fromTokyo or from Nicosia. And no source had the slightest idea about theexistence of the others or of their capabilities. If the information provided byone source were markedly different from that provided by others, it meant thatthere was something wrong with that source. It couldn't be the other wayround: that there was something wrong with all the other sources - that theywere swallowing some disinformation and only one was producing the truth.In any case, if the same piece of apparatus was dehvered from different cornersof the globe and if, when it was copied, it gave the desired results and satisfiedthe needs of the Army, there was no need to worry. Even if our friend had beenrecruited by the other side, even if he was a double agent. Never mind. Hewould have provided what we needed, and if the intelligence service on theother side thought it worthwhile to pay so dearly simply to trick us, let them.We gladly accepted such gifts. But the moment the gifts turned out to be ofpoor quality, with faults in them. Information would quickly tip us off aboutit.

The Aquarium did not screen only our friends, but us as well. They checkedup on us frequently, tediously and hypercritically. Another method had beendevised to deal with us, that of straightforward provocation. In the course ofmy training and work the Aquarium had

played many of those tricks on me.They were always concerned to find out how I would react, and I always

reacted correctly: I would report immediately and precisely to my Navigatoreverything that had happened to me and to my friends. If I caught sight of afriend of mine in a wood, I would report it to my chief. If nothing happened tomy friend, that meant that he had been on an operation in the wood, or perhapshe had been there simply so that the commanding officer could check onwhether, if I saw him, I would report it at once. They were always trying tocatch me out, to see which I held dearest - the Aquarium or my friend. It wasthe Aquarium, of course. Just try not reporting - if it turned out to be only ameans of checking on you, that would be the end of everything and you wouldbe on the conveyor and on the way out.

In fact they had recently been checking on me even more, so that I waspermanently taking part in such screening. Now, for example, I had aban-doned my car and was picking my way through a lot of puddles in the dark. Myfeet were cold and wet. I promised myself that when I returned home I wouldget into a bath and lie there for an hour and have a good soak.

In my pocket was a quite small packet, inside which was a Bible. It was a tinyHttle book printed on very thin paper. Such editions were produced by variousreligious societies so that they would be easier to import into the Soviet Union.I was to drop the Bible into a letter-box which was belonging to VovkaFomichev. Fomichev was a captain and an assistant military attache and one ofus - that is to say a man from the Aquarium, recently arrived. Whether herealised it or not, the Aquarium was now playing a whole series of dirty trickson him to test him. I was on my way to his house.

He would take the Bible out of his mail box in the morning. All sorts ofreligious communities and organisations were always pushing them on us. Hewould hardly be likely to know that this time it was we who had dropped thepacket into his box. Perhaps the little book would attract him, or perhaps hemight try to hold on to it to do a Uttle business, because in Russia people aremad to get hold of such httle books and will pay huge sums for them. The nextday was a holiday and Fomichev would not have to go to work. So we would seewhat would happen - would he report the matter straight away in the morningor would he wait till Monday, or would he perhaps not report it at all - eitherhanging on to it or quietly throwing it away lest he

should get into unnecessarytrouble? Any course of action except the first - an immediate report - would bethe end of him. It would mean the conveyor.

It was cold and wet and the wind was blowing the leaves along the pavement.But once a leaf fell into a puddle it stuck there, to be swept away next day by astreet cleaner. There was no one about - only I, a lonely spy belonging to a hugenetwork. I was checking up on one of my colleagues, although it was difficult tosay who was checking whom. Vovka Fomichev was a friend of mine. We hadtwice been out on joint operations together. He worked skilfully and confiden-tly. But, who could tell - he was a recent arrival and perhaps had been givensome special task? Maybe I was now being checked with his assistance? He hadcertainly made friends with me. He wanted to acquire experience. But maybe Iwas again being tested. I could drop the packet in the letter-box and then try to

drop him a friendly hint that he should report the matter at once. But thatwould be the end of me and I would be put on the conveyor: so, they wouldsay, a friend means more to you than our glorious Soviet military intelligenceservice?

The house in which Vovka Fomichev lived was large and very smart. Ithoused a large number of diplomats from various countries. It was of courseunder police surveillance, the main entrance at least. It was possible that itwasn't watched, but it was better to assume that it was and to base one'splans on that assumption. So I did not go in by the front entrance, butthrough some dark rear courtyards past some tidy rubbish bins and into anunderground garage. We had keys to a great many garages and entrances tobuildings in which diplomats usually lived. I could also get into any hotel inVienna without difficulty. We had a huge cupboard full of keys. Whereverour colleages from the Aquarium go they always take a copy of the keys.Most important was to keep a careful record of them so as to be able to findthe key you needed at the right moment. On that occasion I had three keys inmy pocket. If necessary I could have got into Fomichev's flat. He was not toknow that three years previously, a rather unsuccessful predecessor of hishad Hved there and had made copies of the keys for the GRU. Unfortunatelyhe had not had the resources to do anything more heroic, and he had beenevacuated in disgrace and thrown out of the General Staff.

Cats fled in various directions away from the rubbish bins with

painfulsqueals. That was a good sign, because it meant that there were no otherpeople nearby. But perhaps there was a hidden television camera? There wasno light - they were saving electricity. Why have a light in a rear courtyard?But a TV camera could operate with infra-red rays. That was why I had mycoat unbuttoned so that my tie-pin was visible. It looked like an ordinarytie-pin: an expert would have had difficulty proving that it wasn't. But it wascovered with a special paint so that if in the darkness infra-red rays weredirected on me the tie-pin would light up, reacting to the infra-red light. Byturning round I could even estabhsh the position of the hidden camera. If Ihad found that I was being observed I would simply have relieved myselfamong the rubbish bins and strolled away. But the tie-pin did not light up. Iwas not being observed, so I took a key and carefully put it into the keyhole.The door slid quietly aside and I was in a vast garage with hundreds of cars.

I moved very carefully, but not stealthily, like a thief. If anyone saw methey should think that I had just driven in, parked my car and was goinghome. I opened the steel door with another key. Then I went up in the liftfrom the underground garage to the top floor and waited there for a fewminutes, listening carefully. The whole house was asleep; not a door banged,no lift moving in the lift shaft. I looked at my watch. If I was being followedmy visit to the building had to remain a puzzle. Perhaps I had come for ameeting with an American diplomat, or perhaps some woman was waitingfor me. If I was being followed, then even my real purpose - to drop theBible in the letter-box - might appear to them as camouflage and they would

have to ponder it for a long time, because I had spent so much time at the top.

The Ufts were silent in their shafts and no one was walking up or down thestairs: I was quite sure of that.

So then I went cautiously down the stairway. I did not walk on my toes noreven on the whole sole of my shoes. I touched the floor only with the outsidewelts of the shoes, like a clown making his legs into a ring. I had soft soleswhich did not squeak, but it was better to walk as I had been taught. Like thatyour footsteps were never audible. I reached the bottom floor where in themarble vestibules there were dozens of letter-boxes. I knew which one Ineeded, but I looked around at the names on a lot of them, then stood close upto them and dropped my packet in the right opening, covering several of themwith

my body. Anybody watching behind me could hardly have known whichbox I was interested in or what I had put in it.

With a look of boredom, as though I had found nothing of interest, I wentdown the stairs into the underground garage.

Anyone who uses the same path for entering and leaving a place is displaymga lack of taste in conspiratorial work. I have acquired that taste. It is not like ataste for wine, nor a taste for sex, nor a taste for a fight. A taste for a Ufe ofconspiracy is not like any other, and I like it. I understand and appreciate it. Ihave it. It was not a lack of taste which sent me again into the dark garage. Itwas simply that I had no better way out.

I was suffering again from lack of sleep. When would I ever get enough sleep?My eyes were bloodshot. But I turned up in the office at six o'clock in themorning. It was Sunday, and I was waiting for Vovka Fomichev. If he turnedup even earlier than me, that would be magnificent. But there was only Sasha'Aeroflot' yawning in a comer. His eyes were also bloodshot. He had probablyalso been laying a trap for someone, perhaps even for me. He was probablywaiting for someone who was due to drop in, out of breath. He started makingexcuses to me, saying that he had had to finish making out some expenses in ahurry. I realised, of course, that what he said was possibly true, but not thewhole truth. It was some other demand that had brought him into the embassyat six on a Sunday morning. I told him that I had three operational reports stillto be typed for the next post. It was actually true. But he would understandthat it was not the only reason which had dragged me to the office. Hepretended to be working, but was keeping an eye on the clock. I put on a showand watched the clock too, but furtively. I laid out some documents on mydesk and stared at the wall. It was a pity we were not allowed to have windowsin the places where we worked.

At ten a.m. the First Deputy summoned Sasha 'Aeroflot' to his office, leavingme alone in the main office. At 11:32 the Navigator appeared.

'Well, what happened?'

'Comrade general, I deposited the gift without incident. But he has notreacted yet.'

I could tell by the expression on the Navigator's face that they had not beentesting me but Vovka Fomichev. An elementary provocation, and

he had takenthe bait. For some reason or other, having found a Bible in his letter-box, hehad not reported it to his chief. So what would he do if something serioushappened to him? Would he report it? He was clearly a danger to ourorganisation and to the whole Soviet system.

'Viktor Andreyevich, go off home and have a rest. Come back at six thisevening.'

'Very good.'

People all over the world have days off - days when nobody goes to work.Soviet diplomats have two such days every week. Saturday and Sunday.

But the GRU does not have days off. Nor does the KGB. So there you havethe picture. On every free day some of the diplomats do not turn up at theembassy. But the others - the greater number - do. So it becomes clear toeveryone who is a pure diplomat and who is not so pure.

To prevent this happening, all kinds of tricks have been devised to get thepure diplomat into the embassy on a free day, to use his broad friendly smile asa screen and to conceal the work of the residency. On a free day the embassybecomes a veritable ant-heap. It's a clever arrangement. It is on the free days,and only on the free days, that the mail from the Soviet Union is distributed.Letters and newspapers. Everyone needs to read Izvestia, because it publishesthe currency exchange rates. Everyone is busy calculating, trying to work outwhether to change his currency now or to wait. The exchange rates jump upand down, and what the position of the Soviet State Bank will be in a week'stime is known to God alone and no one else, not even the chairman of the bank.

Another feature of the Soviet embassies throughout the world at weekends isthe special shops which are open and sell goods at remarkably low prices. Thewhole Soviet colony flocks to the shop to buy. And again, on Sundays there arelectures. Again they crowd into them, not because they Hke the lectures butbecause you get a good mark if you attend. Nobody forces you to attend thelectures: it's your own business. But if it should appear to someone that IvanNikonorovich, for example, appears rather apathetic and isn't particularlyinterested in politics, he is likely to be sent home - evacuated. Suddenly onenight there's a ring on his doorbell and a message: your father is very ill andwants to say goodbye to you. An escort steps up to Ivan Nikonorovich and,whether he wants to be at

his father's deathbed, or not, he is on his way to theplane.

They also show films in Soviet embassies on Sundays. Recent ones andothers not so recent. Again people turn up in great numbers. Attendance is a

sign of high poUtical awareness and unbreakable ties with your socialistmotherland.

So there are always plenty of people in the embassy at weekends. Nowhere topark your car. But I parked mine. I had a special place reserved for me.

The Navigator and I were strolling round the grounds, which were vast. Aswe chatted we kept glancing towards the gates from a distance. PyotrYegorovich Dunayev, the vice-consul, and Nikolai Tarasovich Moroz, firstsecretary at the embassy, were also strolling around but appearing not to noticeus. They had good reason to be there, because an evacuation was about to takeplace. The assistant Soviet military attache in Vienna, GRU Captain VladimirDimitrievich Fomichev, was unreliable. A plane had already been summonedto Vienna. A very limited number of people were to take part in the evacuation:the Navigator - that was his decision -1 - because I had taken part in the testand knew about Fomichev's unreliabihty - and Colonels Dunayev and Moroz,deputy and First Deputy to the Navigator.

Fomichev's grey Ford swept smoothly through the gate: the assistantmilitary attache had arrived for the cinema, with his wife. Why on earth,Volodya, did you not rush down here with your tongue hanging out? Whydidn't you bring the Bible with you? Why did you conceal it? What use was it toyou? There is no God, and it's time you knew it. All those inventions aboutGod are just vile anti-Soviet rubbish. There's no going to Heaven after you die.Heaven has to be built here on earth. If you think there will be Heaven afterdeath you automatically dissociate yourself from the active construction ofHeaven on earth. We can forgive illiterate old women for believing that, butnot you. You're for the conveyor. They will get the truth out of you. Why didyou hide the Bible? What did you want it for? Perhaps you didn't hide it.Perhaps you were afraid of getting into trouble. So you took it and threw it intoa rubbish bin, thinking no one would find out. But we know everything! Youmust report everything that happened to you. The GRU will never forgive youfor being silent.

The Navigator's deputy strolled slowly across to the gate. There was onlyone way of getting into the embassy and it was the only way out. It was alreadycut off for the assistant military attache. There was a guard on the gate, but theguard knew nothing and would know nothing so long as the assistant militaryattache did not try to escape. If he did, then the mousetrap would spring shutin his face. The Navigator and the First Deputy were ambling towards thelibrary, not hurrying. Near the library was an extra entrance to the bunker.

I would stay a little longer where I was.

Then Borya, the third cipher clerk, hurried across to the parking lot. Boryadid not know what was behind it all. His job was to go up to Fomichev, saluteand say: 'Vladimir Dimitrievich, there's a message for you.'

I watched from a distance.

Now Borya was near his car and Fomichev got out. The expression on hisface was not visible. He was saying something to his wife; then he gave her aquick kiss. She went off alone to the cinema. He certainly didn't know that he

had kissed his wife for the last time. He was now regarded as a criminal. He hadnot reported to his commanding officer that the bourgeois world had tried toseduce him and divert him from the right path. He would not, of course, beshot for that. But he'd be sent to prison. He wouldn't get a long sentence - fiveyears for an attempt to deceive the resident. They would add something whenhe was in prison. They always add something for people like that. And, if heever got out of prison (we have a special prison of our own), it was unlikely thathis wife would want to see him. She would throw him over. I studied her faceonce at a diplomatic reception at very close quarters. She would throw himover.

Time for me to move.

Through the steel door, along the corridor and down the stairs. Anotherdoor, the one with the grinning skull. Down again, into the bunker and themain office. Another corridor, into the small office, another corridor withdoors to right and left. He was now in the First Deputy's office. I rang the bell.The First Deputy's face appeared round the door, which he used as a shield.You couldn't see what was going on inside the office.

'What do you want?'

*Do you need any help?'

'No. Goˆd watch the film, Viktor Andreyevich. We can cope.'

'Au revoir, Nikolai Tarasovich.'

'Au revoir.'

Down the corridor, up the stairs and into the little office

'Vitya!' The First Deputy was running after me.

'Yes,' comrade colonel.'

'Vitya -1 completely forgot. Wait till the end of the film and meet up with hiswife Valentina. Tell her that her husband is off on an urgent job that will take acouple of days. Don't upset her. Say it's a secret operation. Fix it so that shedoesn't suspect anything. And take her home. In the meantime move his carfrom the parking lot and hide it in the underground garage. Here are the keys.That's it. See you tomorrow.'

Tomorrow, Nikolai Tarasovich.'

Valya Fomicheva was a very special woman - the sort that people turned tolook at and follow with their eyes. She was quite short, with hair cut like aboy's. Huge, captivating eyes. A rather capricious smile. There was somethingmischievous hovering around the corners of her mouth. There wasundoubtedly something of the devil in her, but you couldn't say what. Perhapsall her charm was devilish. Why on earth had Volodya chosen such a wife? Abeautiful wife - somebody else's wife. Who in the embassy didn't look at her?They all had their eyes on her. In the city too. Especially men from the south.Frenchmen and Italians. Especially tall, thick-set men with a touch of grey intheir hair. Her compact figure gave them no peace. I even found it rather

awkward to travel in a car with her. If we stopped at a crossroads reproachfulglances would be directed at me, as if to say: why do you need such a beautifulwoman?

But she was certainly not mine. I was driving her home because her husbandwas already on the conveyor. He was already giving evidence.

They wouldextract the necessary confessions from him here in Vienna. Then he wouldland in the Aquarium, in the huge glass building on the Khoroshevskoyehighway.

For the moment Valya, his wife, hadn't the slightest idea about all that. Hehad gone off into the night, on a job. It didn't worry her: she was used to that.She was more interested in telling me about the wonderful new raincoats thatthe whole of Vienna was wearing. They had streaks of gold in them, and werereally very attractive. Such a coat would suit her well. She would look hke theSnow Queen and disturb our peace with her cold, contemptuous look. Shecompressed a lot of authority into her tighdy closed fists. There was no doubtthat she would dominate anyone who came her way, despite the fact that shewas very fragile, and if you squeezed her she would shatter like a crystal vase.With a woman like Valya Fomicheva you should never spend more than onenight, before you throw her over and get away. Otherwise she would make youher slave, bend you and bring you to your knees. I know women like that: therewas one just like it in my life. Also small and fragile. People also turned to lookat her. I left her myself, without waiting for her to drive me out, to deceive meand get me on my knees.

It was silly of Captain Fomichev to have fallen for such a woman. I knew forsure that she despised him, while he, out of jealousy, spied on her. Yielding to apassing mood, she had agreed to become his wife, and even now, on theconveyor, he was thinking only of her. One question would not leave himalone. Who was now driving her home? He had no need to worry: it was I,Vitya Suvorov. I had no need of her. I avoided such women. In any case,Vienna was not the place to go in for such things. We judged each other toostrictly and followed each other too closely.

*Suvorov, why do you never smile at me?'

*Am I the only one who doesn't?'

'Yes. Everyone smiles at me. Are you afraid of me?'

*No.'

*Suvorov, you are afraid of me. But I'll make you smile.'

'Is that a threat?'

'No, a promise.'

We were both silent for the rest of the trip. I knew that it was not aGRU provocation. Women hke her talked that way naturally. Moreover,the GRU couldn't be keeping an eye on me just then. GRU operationswere carefully prepared and carried out. They differed from operationscarried out by other intelligence services by their simplicity. The GRUnever went after two hares at the same time. That was why the GRU wasso successful.

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*I hope, Suvorov, you are not going simply to drop me near my house. I am abeautiful woman -1 know that. I might be raped on the stairway. You wouldbe held responsible.'

That doesn't happen in Vienna.'

*A11 the same, Vm afraid to be alone.'

She was afraid of nothing in this life. I knew such women. Wild animals inskirts. At the age of sixteen she had surely carried a heavy knife in her stronglittle hand. If anything had gone wrong she would have been ready to use it, thehttle devil. Maybe she had used it, who could tell?

We were alone in the lift. She said with a laugh:

'Are you sure that my Volodya is not coming home tonight?'

*He's out on an operation.'

*And you're not afraid to leave me alone at night? Someone might steal me.'

The lift came to a gentle halt. I opened the door for her and she took her key.

*What are you doing this evening?'

'Sleeping.'

'Who do you sleep with, Suvorov?'

*I sleep on my own.'

'And I am alone too,' she sighed.

She stepped across the threshold and suddenly turned to me. Her eyes

wereflaming. Her face that of a pure little schoolgirl. That is the most treacherousmind of woman. I hate them.

All evacuations are carried out by plane. It's very quick and there is only onepolice control to go through.

They are also always carried out in the daytime. At night the police are moresuspicious, and in the morning a new shift comes on with renewed strength. Inthe evening planes do not usually leave on long flights. So the afternoon is best.

The former GRU captain and assistant military attache was sitting on a stool,his head hanging down. He was not tied down; he was just sitting. But he nolonger had any desire to shout or make a fuss. He had already gone through thefirst stage of the conveyor: he had confessed. Yes, there had been a Bible in hisletter-box. No, he was not interested in reUgion. Yes, he had been afraid ofreporting it, because too many such reports were bad for his record. Yes, hehad thrown the book into a rubbish bin - the third one from the left. The Biblewas already lying on the table. Everything had been found. The Bible was in acellophane cover.

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While I had been driving his wife home they had already extracted from himthe first layer of evidence. Yes, he admitted, he had concealed things from theNavigator before. He had visited prostitutes - on four occasions. But no - hehad had no contact with Western intelUgence. Nor had anyone tried to recruithim. No - he had not given away any secret information.

Evacuation was the answer.

*Hand me the spirit.'

Instead of surgical spirit we usually used ordinary Gordon's gin out of theNavigator's bar.

'Syringe.'

It was a one-shot injection. It looked like the one Spetsnaz. But this was not'Blissful death', simply 'Bliss'.

'Spirit.'

The place where he had had the injection had to be carefully swabbed

toavoid infection.

We were in the departure lounge of the airport. The roar of aircraft engines;the polished floor; and the souvenirs, lots of souvenirs. Dolls in national dress,Ronson Hghters. Then came the ticket barrier. Any baggage? No baggage -just a short stay. Passports, please!

Our passports are green. 'In the name of the Union of Soviet SocialistRepublics, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR '

Carry on.

There were three of us: the former captain, myself and the vice-consul. Onthe surface we were just seeing him off, but in fact we were directly in charge ofhim. And over by a kiosk with a lot of bottles was the Consul-general of theUSSR, covering us at a distance, in case we needed protection or someone tofrighten off the authorities.

Then our flight was announced. A long line of passengers, and a toothystewardess. Wait a moment, please! Let the diplomatic mail go through: it'syours in any case. Carry on to the plane.

We walked across to the aircraft, a TU-134. There were two sets of steps upto it. The rear ones for most of the passengers; the ones at the front for VIPsand the diplomatic mail. For us, that meant. Another stewardess at the plane'sdoor, also with prominent teeth. What had she to smile at? But how could sheknow that the former captain was no longer a VIP? How could she know thathe was not smiling because he fancied the stewardess's backside, but simplybecause he had been given a shot of 'Bhss'?

There were two big diplomatic couriers standing at the steps. They knewwhat sort of a load they had to deal with. They were armed and made no secretof it. That was international diplomatic practice, laid down at the ViennaCongress of 1815.

They helped the former captain up the steps. For some reason his feet didn't

seem to find the steps very easily. He was dragging his feet. But never mind:they would help him. At the doorway the two big fellows turned the formercaptain sideways: they couldn't get in the door three abreast. I again caughtsight of their faces. The former Soviet diplomat was smiling with a gentlegood-natured smile. Who was he smiling at?

At me, perhaps?So I smiled back.

Chapter Fifteen

Tut it on,' the Commander ordered, and I put the transparent hehnet over myhead. He did the same, and we now looked Uke astronauts. Our two helmetswere joined by flexible transparent tubes.

It was impossible to overhear what was being said in the commander's office,even theoretically. But if, in addition to all the other security arrangements, heordered you to use the special device for talking, it meant that the conversationwould deal with something exceptionally interesting.

Tou are doing very well, and not only at intelligence-gathering. Yourecently went through a series of tests organised by the Aquarium and myself.You had no idea that you were being tested, but you passed through thembrilliantly. You are now in the highest category as far as trustworthiness isconcerned.'

If that was true it meant that the GRU was somewhat over-estimating me. Iknew I had sinned in the past: I was no saint. But perhaps the Navigator wasnot telling me the whole truth. He was, after all, known as 'the cunning one'.

The GRU is entrusting you with the carrying out of an extremely importantoperation. In the near future an agent known as the Green Friend is due toarrive in Vienna. He is a very important man for us - just how important youcan judge from the fact that Colonel-general Meshcheryakov is controlling himpersonally in Moscow. Who the Green Friend is I do not know and have noright to know. You, of course, have even less right to know. You'll rememberthat we never meet these people face to face. The Green Friend, like the others,operates through a system of dead-letter drops and signals. The GRU is,however, ready to have a meeting with him at any moment, and we have to besure that contact can be made in any circumstances and at any time. So onceevery few years we arrange check-up meetings. He receives an urgentsummons and keeps an appointment, but we do not actually make contact withhim. We simply observe him from a distance. The fact that he reacts to theinvitation provides the GRU with confirmation that our communicationssystem is working properly. Moreover we are able to check what security thereis around him. We are about to conduct such an operation now.

'The head of the GRU has given orders that you are to be in charge of theoperation. We shall take a room for you in an hotel. You will spend two dayswith a large group covering your tail to make sure you are not followed. Travelthe whole country. Drop your car in Innsbruck and disappear - vanish intothin air. Return to Vienna like a ghost and carry out a final check on your tail.

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Enter the hotel through the restaurant and slip upstairs to the room, whereeverything will have been prepared for you.

There will be a Minox camera with a telescopic lens and a "Mikrat 93"film loaded in it. The film has two layers of emulsion on it, one of which hasalready been exposed with pictures of Austrian military aerodromes on it.You will be using the other layer. If you are arrested try to rip the film outof the camera and expose it. But if you don't succeed in doing that and theydevelop it they will get only pictures of aerodromes and the developer willdestroy what you have taken. Let them think you are just a small-time spy.All clear?'

Tes.'

'Right, then Hsten to this. The Friend will show up at a certain time at thewindow of a shoe shop. You will be a hundred metres from him andeighteen metres higher up. You will take a picture of him when he appears.I don't know who he will be. He might even be a woman dressed as a man,or a man dressed as a woman. Don't be surprised if it's someone in filthyclothes or with uncombed hair. That's all the better for the job. For half anhour before he is due to appear you are to snap any activity that strikes youas suspicious.

*You will recognise him because he will appear at precisely the time andplace agreed. He will have a folded newspaper in his right hand, and thatwill serve as both a recognition signal and also as a sign that all is well. If thenewspaper is in his left hand, that's a danger signal. He is keeping theappointment, but he doesn't know whether we will meet him or not. If he isbeing followed he may abort the meeting, and in that way protect our officerand save his own skin at the same time. If he is being watched by the poHceit is in his own interest to reduce the number of contacts with us. If in fiveminutes nobody makes contact with him he will go away and will keepanother appointment when we request it. Perhaps in ten years and on theother side of the world. And perhaps once again we shall only be checkingup on him without actually meeting him. Anything not clear?'

'AH is clear.'

'Finally: I shall let you know without warning, just before it begins, thetime and place of the operation. In the time that remains until the operationyou are not allowed to have any contact with foreigners. If you are forced tohave any contact, report it to me personally. Nobody, not even the firstcipher clerk, knows anything about the case. The telegram from Moscowwas in my personal code. You must have no other camera with you in thehotel room apart from the one I shall give you before the operation. Anothercamera might cost you your head. Be careful with the Minox. It has beenloaded in the Aquarium and sealed. The seal is practically invisible: becareful not to damage it. What the Friend looks like you are not allowed totell anyone, even me. The sealed Minox will go to the Aquarium in thediplomatic mail and will be opened there and the film developed by a specialprocess. Have you understood everything?'

*Every thing.'

'Then repeat it all to me from the beginning.'

The hotel room had been chosen by someone who knew his job. I had a cornerroom, so that I could watch three quiet side-streets at the same time. There wasthe shoe shop. There was practically no traffic in the adjoining streets. Threehours and ten minutes remained until the Friend was due to appear.

Some thoughtful person had prepared everything I might need: the tele-scopic lens for the Minox, about as big as an electric torch battery; a big pair ofZeiss binoculars; an Omega chronometer; a selection of hght filters, a map ofthe city and a thermos flask with hot coffee. The Minox itself I had broughtwith me in my pocket.

There it was, in the palm of my hand: a Httle chromium-plated rectanglewith httle knobs and windows. All the world's intelligence services had beenworking with the Minox for half a century. It was a Minox that Philby usedwhen he was spying for the Soviets against the British. It was a Minox thatColonel Penkovsky used when he was spying for the British against theSoviets. And there it was in the palm of my hand - the tiny, finely made Minox.I fitted the telescopic lens and tried it out. I only wanted to measure thedistance. For such a small camera a hundred metres was a big distance. If myhand shook everything would be blurred. The Minox had not been inventedfor this

kind of work.

The time passed very slowly. The lid of the thermos, which served me as a cup,had steam rising from it. A fat woman left a house and went down the street.Nothing of interest. A postman passed by on his bicycle. Then the streets werequite empty. A black Mercedes went down the street with a man in the backseat dressed in white robes: the representative of some poor country on his wayto a meeting to demand money from richer countries. Diplomats from richcountries were also on their way to meetings. But the richer ones had moremodest cars - they drove Fords and Volkswagens. The experts say that in thefuture the gap between the rich and the poor countries will get bigger. Theyshould know. A bigger gap will mean that the diplomats from the poorercountries will travel in Rolls-Royce limousines, while the diplomats from thericher countries will probably switch to bicycles to save money.

The fine hand on the very precise little chronometer went slowly round andround. The fat woman went past again. Again the sound of the tyres of a hugeblack limousine with tinted glass windows: some poor diplomat going to begfor aid. I again swept the street with the Zeiss binoculars, so as not to missanything, to memorise the numbers and the faces. There were not many ofthem. To memorise every Uttle sign of life, every change. I had the Minox

ready cocked, like an anti-aircraft gun on a tank, constantly prepared foraction. Anything suspicious would be on film. The frames on a Minox film aretiny, so that you can get a great niany on a short film.

But what on earth was that? I hadn't quite taken in what was going on. I wassuddenly overwhelmed by an awareness of something terrible and irreparable.A very elegant Citroen had stopped on the street. I would have recognised itamong a thousand other cars - it was the First Deputy's Citroen. A woman gotout of it, bent down quickly towards the First Deputy and kissed him. And thatwas the moment that my little Minox snapped. The woman got into a Fiatsports car and drove off. The First Deputy had long disappeared from thestreet.

I sat in an armchair and bit my Hps, The woman was certainly not the FirstDeputy's wife. I knew his wife. Nor was the woman a secret agent. The Naviga-tor knew the time and place of every operation, and he would certainly havebanned all operations in my vicinity at that time. So it meant that the GRU wasagain trying me out. They had stuck me

in that stupid room and put on a Httllecomedy for me. Now they were waiting to see whether I would report theoffence committed by the man I admired so greatly or whether I would try tocover up for him. That was why they had given me a camera, to be able to tellwhether I had hesitated for even a moment or had used the camera immediately. They would also be able to tell from the photo whether my hands hadbeen shaking or not.

But I had other reasons for biting my hps. Another possibility remained.That quiet side-street was very suitable for secret encounters of all kinds. Veryfew people were aware that I was sitting there in the hotel behind heavy shut-ters. Even the First Deputy might not know, if he had not been involved in theoperation. And his mistress? An American woman? Or English? She was obvi-ously foreign. Soviet women are not allowed to have cars when they are abroad.Certainly not sports cars. What would they need sports cars for? All cars belongto the Soviet state and are to be used only by those who are working to protectand increase the might of the state. If all this was not some kind of show put onto test me, then it was the end for the First Deputy. He faced a dismal end. Itwas the conveyor for him, the whole works. But it could be just a test for me.There had been plenty of them. I had acted exactly as I should have done -quickly and decisively. My unseeing eyes looked out on an empty street.Nobody was disturbing its peace. Only an unpleasant-looking, rather bentfigure with a newspaper in his hand was hanging around the window of the shoeshop. Goodness knows what the fellow could find to interest him there.

I leant back in my chair and stared at the ceiling. Then suddenly I leapt up,overturning the thermos. I grabbed the Minox and feverishly pressed therelease. That was himl Danm it all, that was the Green Friend. Once, twice, andthen again the shutter clicked. To hell with all the Friends, along with Colonel-general Meshcheryakov, the First Deputy and his whore. Time was up. TheFriend threw his newspaper into a rubbish bin and disappeared round thecorner.

The quality of the photos might turn out to be unsatisfactory and that wouldreveal my mental state. That would draw attention to the fact that I did not wantto report on the First Deputy and that I had hesitated.

I stood up. I removed the telescopic lens from the camera. I packed thethermos, the lens, and the binoculars into a parcel and dropped

them into abowl. Somebody else would clear up after me. The Minox I held firmly in myleft hand. Like that it would be easier to rip the film out if I were arrested. Ah, ifonly they would arrest me. Perhaps I could simulate being seized by the pohce?No, that wouldn't work. The Consul-general would phone the pohce and betold that no one had attacked me. Then I should be put on the conveyor.

I went out on to the street where the bright sunhght blinded me. No, in thisjoyful world things just couldn't be that bad. It had been a routine check-up. Atypical GRU provocation. And I had not taken the bait. At the Academy theyhad organised much worse check-ups for us. The fives of our closest friendswere at stake. Then later it was explained that it had been just a fittle bit ofplay-acting thought up by our chiefs. Many of us didn't pass those tests, and Idid. And we were forgiven for a few minutes' hesitation. We were, after all,only human.

* Where did the Friend appear from?'

I thought for a moment - should I tell a lie or not?

'I didn't notice, comrade general.'

*You had a chronometer. Did he not turn up exactly on time?'

I remained silent.

*Did something confuse you? Was there something suspicious? Somethingyou couldn't understand or explain? What put you off?'

Tour First Deputy "

A look of bafflement, then of pain appeared in his eyes.

*... your First Deputy was at the meeting place twenty-two minutes beforethe Friend appeared ... with a woman.'

The bones on his fists stood out imnaturally white. His face was white too.Silently he studied the wall behind me. Then he asked, quietly and calmly:

Tou did not, of course, manage to take a shot of him?'

It was difficult to tell whether he was asking a question or making a state-ment. Perhaps he was threatening.

Tn fact, I did.'

I was afraid to look him in the eyes, so I looked down at my feet. The timedragged dully, unwillingly on. The clock on the wall ticked on - tick, tick, tick.

'What are we going to do?'

'I don't know,' I said, hunching my shoulders.

'What are we going to do?' He brought his fist down on the desk and at thesame time I was sprayed with the spit from his mouth as he shouted : 'What

SHALL WE DO?'

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*Get ready to evacuate him,' I said suddenly and crossly into his face.

My shout calmed him down and he went quiet. He became just anunfortunate old man upon whom a great sorrow had descended. He was astrong character, but the system was stronger than any of us. It was strongerthan all of us. The system was all-powerful. Any one of us could come under itsinexorable axe. He was looking into emptiness.

*You know, Vitya, in 1964 Colonel Moroz saved me from a death sentence.Since then I have taken him with me round the world. He recruited women.But such women! Such is life. He was very fond of them, and they fell for himtoo. I knew that he had a Httle something on the side. I knew he had a mistressin every city. I forgave him. But I knew that he would come unstuck one day. Iknew. How can you hide such things in Austria? Can we do the evacuationbetween us?'

Tes, we can.'

*Get the syringe from the cupboard.'

Tvegotit.'

He pressed the button on his intercom: The first cipher clerk.'

*Here, comrade general,' came the reply.

The First Deputy to me.'

*Very well.'

*Sit down,' said the Navigator in a tired voice. He was already sitting

at hisdesk, his left hand on the desk-top, his right hand in a drawer. That's where itstayed. I was standing behind the chair in which the First Deputy was nowsitting. The fact that the Navigator's hand was in the drawer told the FirstDeputy everything. And my presence told him that it was I who had observedhim and had reported something back. He stretched out his whole body untilhis bones cracked and then quietly put his arms round behind the back of thechair. He knew the rules of the game. I slipped the handcuffs on him, thencarefully turned up the sleeve of his jacket, undid the gold cuff-link andexposed his arm. I dipped a white napkin in gin from a green bottle andswabbed the place where the needle was to enter. I then filled the syringe withthe slightly opaque liquid and inserted the needle carefully beneath the skin.Then I removed the needle and again wiped the arm.

With a nod of the head the Navigator indicated that I was to leave. I left hisoffice and as I closed the door I heard him say, in a voice empty of emotion:

Tell me all about it '

I felt ill, really ill.

Nothing Hke it had ever happened to me before. Only weak people feel ill. Itis they who think up thousands of illnesses and give in to them and so waste

their lives. It is weak people who invented headaches, sudden attacks ofweakness, fainting fits and pangs of conscience. There are no such things inreality. All those troubles exist only in the imaginations of the weak. I don'tinclude myself among the strong. I am just normal. And a normal persondoesn't have headaches or heart attacks or nervous breakdowns. I have neverbeen ill, never moaned and never asked anyone for help.

But on that occasion I felt very bad. I had an unbearable depression, a deadlydepression. I could have killed someone!

I was sitting in a httle inn - in a corner, like a cornered wolf. The table-clothon which I had placed my elbows was checked. Red and white. A cleantable-cloth. A big mug of beer. The beer was Uke brandy in colour. It wasprobably very different in taste, but I couldn't taste anything. There were twolions standing on their haunches carved on the sides of the beer-mug. Theywere holding a shield in their paws. A beautiful shield and beautiful hons.Their pink tongues

were sticking out. I was very fond of all sorts of cats: I lovedleopards and panthers and black cats and grey cats. I also liked the lionsdepicted on the sides of the beer mugs. The cat is a beautiful animal, evendomesticated. Clean and strong. A cat differs from a dog by its independentspirit. And how flexible they were! Why did people not worship cats?

The people in the inn were all very cheerful. They probably all knew eachother and were smiling at each other. Opposite me there were four healthy-looking peasants, with feathers in their hats and leather shorts down to theirknees, held up by braces. They looked a very tough bunch with their gingerbeards. There was already no room on their table for the empty beer mugs.They were laughing. What were they laughing about? I would have liked tohurl my beer mug into those laughing faces. Who cared if there were four ofthem or that they had fists like my regimental commander, as big as beer mugsthemselves.

Should I have a go at them? Let them kill me here on the spot. Let themcrack my skull with an oaken stool or an Austrian beer mug. But they wouldn'tkill like that. They would throw me out of the bar and call the pohce. So shouldI have a go at the police? Or what about Brezhnev, who was due to arrive inVienna soon to meet poor misguided Carter? Perhaps I might go for Brezhnevwith an axe? Then they would certainly kill me.

Only was it really worthwhile, dying at the hands of a pohceman or of one ofBrezhnev's secret bodyguards? It was another matter to be killed by goodstrong people Uke those over there.

They were still laughing.

I have never really envied anybody. But now black envy slithered into mymind Hke a snake in the grass. How I wanted some shorts like theirs and a hatwith a feather. I already had the mug of beer. What else could a man want tocomplete his happiness?

They were rocking with laughter. One of them started to cough, and thatstopped his laughing. Another one stood up, with a full mug in his hand, thefroth coming over the top. He was also laughing. I looked him straight in the

eyes. I don't know what there was in my eyes, but when he met my stare thepowerful Austrian, leader of the whole company, fell

inmiediately silent, hisface fell and his smile faded. He also looked me straight in the eyes with a fixedintent gaze. His eyes were clear and directed right at me. He compressed hislips and put his head to one side.

Whether it was because my look had a cold, deathly air about it, or whetherhe had the impression that I was about to ruin myself, I do not know. I don'tknow what he was thinking, but when his eyes met mine, that tough-lookingpeasant seemed to lose some of his fire. Everyone around him was laughing; thedrink was having its effect. But he stood there with a long face, staring at theground. I even began to feel sorry for him. Why had I with one glance spoilt theman's whole evening?

How long they stayed there I was not sure, but they finally stood up and left,the biggest one being the last to leave. He stopped in the doorway and looked atme, frowning. Then suddenly he heaved his whole mighty frame across to mytable. He was an intimidating as a tank in battle. My jaw froze in anticipation ofa crashing blow. But I wasn't in the least afraid. Go ahead, Austrian, hit me! Ihad really wrecked his evening, and for that in our country you inevitably getpunched in the face. That's a tradition. He came up to me, his huge bellyblocking the light. Hit me! I shan't resist. Hit me, don't spare me! He grippedmy left shoulder with his huge fist and gently squeezed it. It was a powerfulhand, but warm and friendly, not at all leaden. And it was as though humansympathy flooded through that hand. With my right hand I gripped his armand squeezed it gratefully. I didn't look him in the eyes, I don't know why. Ilooked down at the table, while he made his way to the exit, clumsily andwithout turning round. A strange character, a being from another planet. But ahuman being, nevertheless. A good man. A better man that I was. A hundredtimes better.

What on earth was happening to me? What changes had taken place? Whatwere these sudden leaps? I was feeling better - because of the beer, no doubt.Or perhaps it was because of the huge horny hand that had grabbed me by theshoulder and held me back from the brink. But what exactly was the matterwith me? Why had the bright world become so dark for me? Perhaps it waswhat the weak called pangs of conscience? But it couldn't be: I had noconscience. It wasn't troubling me: why should it, after all? Because I hadbetrayed the First Deputy? True, he was a decent chap. But if I hadn't put himon the conveyor, he would have done the same for me. That was the sort of jobwe had. By reporting on the First Deputy I had protected the GRU from allsorts of accidents. For such acts Kir in the Central Committee would say thankyou. They would remove the First Deputy and send another one.

Was itworthwhile getting upset about? If everyone just gave in to his own feelings thewhole system would collapse. As it is, it stands firm and gets stronger. And its

strength lies in the fact that it immediately gets rid of anyone who weakens,anyone who lets his feelings have their way.

Had I weakened? Undoubtedly. Had I made an enemy in the Navigator? Itwas certain. And had anyone seen me? Possibly. Could any outsider have seenwhat I was going through? Of course he could. If I was looking depressed, ifmy arms were hanging loose, if I pulled a long face - that was all visible. If theAustrian had understood that I was in a bad way, an experienced intelligenceofficer who might have been following me would have understood long ago.After the evacuation of the First Deputy the Navigator was quite capable ofhaving a tail put on me, just to make sure: how was Number Forty-onebehaving? Was he showing signs of weakness?

Something had happened to me, and for several hours I had lost control ofmyself. If the Navigator got to know about it, I could expect to be evacuatedthe same night. The next regular plane was in three days' time. I would spendthose days locked in the photographic laboratory, it was likely that I wouldfinish up in the darkness that very night. Even an ordinary aircraft on whichthe navigation instruments momentarily fail is grounded. The same applied toan intelligence officer, only more so. A spy who had lost control of himself wasdangerous and had to be removed at once.

I walked slowly from the inn to my car. If you want to find out for certainwhether you are being followed, behave as calmly as you can. Keep lookingdown. Reassure those who are following you. Then you will see them because,once put off their guard, they will give themselves away. For many years now Ihave behaved like a fighter pilot, constantly scaiming the rear-view mirror. Ilook behind more than ahead. It's part of my job. But not now. Now I wantedto give anyone who might be following me an opportunity to relax and be lessvigilant. I simply drove my car straight ahead, without any tricks or turns, orany attempt to shp into side-streets.

I drove along the Danube embankment, over a bridge and then along theriver again. I didn't hurry or indulge in sudden bursts of speed, and I didn'tmake for the railway line. (It's easy to check whether you are being followedalong the railway.) I drove around the centre of the

city, using wide roads in thegeneral stream of the traffic, so making it easy for someone to follow me,although very difficult for me. From the Schwedenplatz I made for theAspernplatz. There I turned sharply into the first side-street on the left in thedirection of the main post office, then another turn to the right. There I had tostop at traffic lights. I knew they were there. But did the fellow who wasfollowing me?

I stood at the lights, alone, in the narrow winding side-street.... In a secondthe lights would turn green. Round the corner hurtled a battered green Fordwith a screech of brakes. There was a young man at the wheel who had notknown about the lights round the corner and hadn't thought I would bewaiting for him there. I now moved off slowly with the lights at green. I justmanaged to catch sight of his bespectacled face in my driving mirror. Yes, Iknew that face. He did not have a diplomatic number on his car, but he was a

Soviet diplomat. I had seen him in a delegation at the conference on armsreduction in Europe. I had not thought he was one of our number. I hadthought he was a straight diplomat. But what was a Soviet diplomat doing,dashing round the city in his working hours? Why had he come shooting roundthe corner at such breakneck speed? He could easily get fined.

I was not hurrying any more. I wore an expression of complete indifference onmy face; I noticed nothing and reacted to nothing. The Ford had not turned upagain, or maybe it had, but I wasn't going looking for it any more. Once wasenough for me. It was perfectly clear to me that I had been followed. There wasnot the slightest doubt about that.

The driver of the Ford was probably wondering now whether I had seen himor not. Had I recognised him? He would be comforting himself with thethought that my mind was probably elsewhere, that I hadn't looked behind meand so I couldn't have seen him.

I wondered how many cars the Navigator had sent to follow me. Certainlymore than one. If there had been only one car after me, there would have beenat least two men in it. Since there had been only a single person in the car, itmeant that there were several cars. That was obvious. And being followedcould end up only with being sent back to Moscow.

One had to understand the reasoning of the men in charge of the GRU. If aman lost control over himself after some trifling incident, it meant that hemight so the same again some day. At a critical moment, perhaps. And maybehe had already lost control over his actions in the past? Perhaps enemyorganisations had already taken advantage of this?

They would come to get me later in the night. If I were in the Navigator'splace I would do exactly the same: first, have me followed immediately afterthe incident, and, second, once I was convinced that something had gonewrong, give instructions for 'evacuation'.

I was not going to the embassy. To go there would mean handcuffs and aninjection, immediately. I was going home. I needed to prepare myself for theinevitable, and to meet my fate with dignity.

I locked the door of my flat from the inside and left the window slightly open. IfI lacked the courage to meet them face to face I would jump out of the window.I was seven floors up and that was quite sufficient. But that was the easy wayout and I was having second thoughts about it. It was the way out for the faintof heart, for those who feared the conveyor. If at the last moment I got coldfeet, then I would use that escape. A proud GRU officer had recently dodgedthe conveyor by that very same means: he had thrown himself out of a windowonto the pavement in the very centre of Paris. Another GRU officer based in

London had been working with the very important group in Switzerland. Hehad made some mistake, but didn't want to go on the conveyor. So he openedhis veins.

It was all very well talking now. All the same, I wouldn't go out throughthe window. That was no way for me. So I stood up and closed it firmly. Iwould neither go on the conveyor nor jump out of the window. When theyknocked I would open the door and get my teeth into the throat of one ofthem.

What was left for me to do? Theoretically I might be able to go underground and make myself a hiding-place somewhere in the mountains. Theyhad trained me well in Spetsnaz

I glanced at my watch and a shudder went up my spine. It was twelveminutes past midnight. I knew the ways of the Aquarium. An evacuationusually started at four o'clock in the morning. The

Aquarium always struckat dawn, just as Hitler did. That was when the deepest sleep came. Theymight, of course, start earher, but then they would have to have startedplacing their people already. It might be too late for me now. It was quitepossible that a couple of men were biding their time on the landing one floorup. There would be another couple at the exit and of course someone in thegarage. The main group would be waiting somewhere nearby. I didn't havemuch of a chance. All I could do was to go carefully out of the flat withoutcalling the lift; walk down two or three flights; and only then get the liftdown. I could take the lift right into the underground garage and then driveout, not by the exit, but by the entrance, if I could get the door open from theinside.

I unlocked the door silently, then very carefully began to turn the handle.It was all-important that the door shouldn't squeak. I took a deep breath andpulled the door towards me. A shaft of hght from the corridor shone widerand wider on the floor of my room. Holding my breath I drew the doortowards me further. It squeaked, quietly, sadly and long.

I had managed it. My car was now parked some way away, from my home,standing in a dark corner among a mass of other cars on a huge parking lot.But I could see my own house very clearly. So far there was nothingsuspicious taking place around it. Everything and everybody was asleep.Then, after I had been watching for a long time and seeing nothing, at fouro'clock exactly a light came on in my flat. It was what I had expected.

I was in a forest. A cold, grey dawn. Patches of fog. A ground frost. I was notyet running anywhere. I was there simply to have time to think.

There was something bothering me: the choice I was faced with. It was avery difficult choice - to resist or not to resist. The Soviet system haddestroyed many people, including some very powerful leaders. It is still not

clear to historians why people like Tukhachevsky, Yezhov, Berzin andYagoda* went to their deaths like lambs to the slaughter. But not everybodybehaved like that. General Vlasov created the Russian Liberation Army with amillion volunteers. Raskolnikov simply escaped abroad. All those who tried toput up resistance to the system have been placed by history into the category offoul traitors. So I was faced

with a choice: to surrender without a fight, like alamb, or to become a foul traitor. As far as the system is concerned I am guiltyof nothing, but I am down for evacuation and that would inevitably befollowed by the conveyor. If I were to shout that I was innocent, it wouldchange nothing. Millions had done the same before me.

So if I didn't want to be a lamb, I should have to become a traitor. Thatwould be terrible, if I were not a traitor already. Because, after all, I had been atraitor for a long time and it was inevitable. That was how it would be seen.Exactly the same as with my leaders. All those who had not fled abroad, buthad continued faithfully to serve Lenin, had later turned out to be traitors. Allthe people around Lenin - Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Bukharinand Tomsky - had turned out to be a gang of hired murderers, traitors andspies. What had Lenin been? Lenin had been the leader of that foul gang. Allthose who had served Stalin so faithfully had also turned out to be traitors,spies and killers - Yagoda, Yezhov, Beria, Tukhachevsky and Blyukher.Then Stalin himself, as it later appeared, was the greatest criminal of all timeand all peoples. Those who faithfully served Khrushchev turned out to beenemies, profligates and criminals, too - Molotov, Kaganovich, Serov,Korotchenko, Shelest, Shelepin, Bulganin. Khrushchev himself turned out tobe a fool and chatterbox. What did it all mean? Sooner or later any one of myleaders could be toppled from Olympus and declared to be a spy, a traitor, aprofligate, a killer, a fool or a chatterbox. And anybody who had served thosetraitors and spies would also be labelled a criminal. So I had nothing to lose. Ihad already been serving those people -1 was already a traitor and a criminal.To escape from them was a crime, but it was a lesser crime than to stay withthem.

The forest was all around me. What was I thinking about? Nothing.Ideology? To hell with ideology. I was not guilty. I had done nothing wrong.My teeth ground together, my fists were tightly balled. I had to get out. Iwould get out, but where? I could stay in the mountains, live in a cave. I wastrained for it. Or maybe I could go to another country, to Britain. It was acountry that Penkovsky had served well, and it would make a nice surprise forthe chief of the GRU. Britain still kicked out the Soviet diplomats it didn'tlike. A hundred at once, the last time. My leaders respected that strength. Irespected that strength.

But did Britain need me? I had no way of knowing unless I asked. Should Iphone the ambassador first? I'd never get through. I knew how embassiesworked. What I had to do was contact a deputy. I knew where the British

* See V. Suvorov, Inside Soviet Military Intelligence, New York: Macmillan, 1984.

diplomats' villas were. There was a group of them all together in one particulardistrict. I'd go to the first one I saw.

The British diplomat's house was large and white, with a colonnaded porch.The driveway was covered with gravel, the garden luxurious. I was not shavedand I was wearing a black leather jacket. I had no car, and I was not in the leastlike a diplomat. In fact I was already no longer a diplomat. I no longerrepresented my country. On the contrary, my country was now searching forme all over the place.

The British diplomat's house was not at all like other houses. There was nodoor-bell. Instead there was a polished brass fox's head as a door-knocker. Itwas very important for me that the master of the house should answer the doorand not one of his servants. I was lucky. It was Saturday; he was not at workand there were no servants.

'Good morning.'

*Good morning.'

I held out my diplomatic passport. He leafed through it, handed it back tome and invited me in.

*I have a message for Her Majesty's government.'

Tlease go to the embassy.'

*I cannot go to the embassy. It's too public there and I have to speak tosomeone who can make a decision. That's why I want to pass this letter by yourhand.'

'I refuse to accept it.' He rose and opened the door for me. T am no spy andplease do not involve me in these spy games.'

'This is not espionage ... any more. This is a letter for Her Majesty'sgovernment. Whether you accept it or not, I am now going to telephone theBritish embassy and say that a letter for the British Government is here in yourhouse ... I shall leave it here and you can do what you like with it.'

He gave me a look that promised no good to me.

'Give me your letter.'

'Give me an envelope, please.'

'You don't even have an envelope?' he said in astonishment.

'Unfortunately not.'

He placed before me a quantity of paper, envelopes and a pen. I pushed thepaper aside and took out of my pocket a bunch of cards with the names andaddresses of cafes and restaurants. Every spy always carries a supply of a dozensuch cards. Rather than explaining to a new contact where you were to meet, itwas much easier to hand him a card, making it clear that you were inviting himto the address written on it.

I looked quickly through them and chose one. For a few seconds I ponderedwhat to write. Then I took the pen and wrote down three letters: GRU. I putthe card into an envelope, stuck the envelope down and wrote the address in

Russian letters: To the Government of Her Majesty'. On the envelope Istamped my personal seal - *173-V-4r.

*Is that all?'

That's all. Goodbye.'

Once again I was in a forest. I kept driving the car further and further. Now anencounter with the local police might also be dangerous. The Soviet embassymight have informed the police that a Soviet diplomat had gone mad and wascareering round the country. They might inform Interpol that I had stolen amillion and was running away. They might dehver a protest to the govern-ment, saying that the Austrian authorities had seized me by force and that I

must be returned immediately, or else They knew how to make loud

protests. I now needed to talk to the British embassy by telephone and toexplain the situation, before some village pohceman stopped me and sum-moned the Soviet consul. Then it would be too late to explain anything toanybody. After the first meeting with the consul I would begin to foam at themouth and laugh or cry, and they would send a special aircraft for me. So longas I was not foaming I was going to

keep trying. I knew where there were someout-of-the-way telephones.

*Hello, British embassy, I have sent a message I know that you will not

connect me with the ambassador, but I need to speak to a responsible person... I don't need to know his name - you decide. I have sent a message '

At last they found someone.

*Hello ... who is that speaking?'

*I have sent a message. The person with whom I sent it knows my name...'

*Is that so?'

Tes. Askhim.'

The phone went silent for some time, then came to life again.

*Do you represent your country?'

*No, I represent only myself.'

Again the phone fell silent.

*What do you want?'

*I want you to open the envelope at once and pass the message to the Britishgovernment.'

The phone fell silent, apart from some heavy breathing.

T can't open the envelope because it's not addressed to me but to thegovernment '

Tlease open it. It is I who signed it. I signed it like that so that its contentsshould not be known by certain people. But I give you the right to open it '

Deep in the depths of the telephone there was some whispering.

*It's a very strange message. Some kind of restaurant '

*No, not that Look on the other side.'

There's also a rather strange message - just some letters.'

That's what you have to transmit.'

Tou are off your head. A message of three letters camiot be of anyimportance.'

'It will be up to Her Majesty's government to decide whether it's importantor not.'

Silence again. Then some crackling and hissing at the other end. And then:'I have found a compromise. I won't send a radio message, but I will send yourmessage by diplomatic mail!' His voice sounded like that of a schoolboy whohad just solved a difficult problem.

'To hell with you and your British compromises. My message may beimportant or not, it's not for me to decide, but it is certainly urgent. An hourfrom now, and possibly even sooner, it will be too late. However, you shouldknow that I am a very persistent person and once I've started something I don'tgive up. I shall call you again, in fifteen minutes. Please show the ambassadormy message.'

'The ambassador's not here today.'

'Then show it to anyone you like. Your secretary, for example. Perhaps shereads the papers. Perhaps she could suggest what you should do '

I then hung up on him.

I kept on the move, avoiding buildings and people until I could phone again. Ikept humming to myself the awful tunes of 'The Wolf Hunt'. Only recently Ihad felt like a trapped animal, but my strength had now returned. I clutchedthe steering wheel with all my strength, as a pilot diving to his death grips hiscontrols. I knew that I would not surrender. I had a strongly built car withwhich I would smash anyone who tried to block my path. If the worst came tothe worst I had a heavy spanner and a huge screwdriver. I was ready to sell myfife dearly. I would die, but in battle!

I called the British Embassy again. My second and last attempt. I had seldomasked anybody for anything twice, and never three times, and I never would.

I had very httle time left. I had promised to phone in fifteen minutes,

but Ihad left it for forty-three minutes because there had been a car standing nearthe telephone I had intended to use and I had to go elsewhere.

'Is that the British Embassy?'

'Yes.' But now everything had changed. The 'yes' was snapped out sharply,like a mihtary command. Then came a man's voice that I recognised: 'Iseverything all right with you? I have been worried because you took so long tocall....'

'About my message....'

'Your message has been transmitted,' he interrupted me. 'It was a very

important message. It's hardly credible, but we've already received a replyfrom London. They are waiting for you We need you. Are you ready?'

Tes.'

'Is the address on the card you sent the place to meet you?'

Tes.'

There is no time on the card - does that mean we should meet you as soon aspossible?'

Tes.'

That's what we assumed. Our official representatives are already waiting foryou there.'

I said 'thank you' in Russian for some reason. I don't know whether heunderstood me.

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small or too banal. Agents for the GRU aresaid to have attended every exhibition onthe planet in the last fifty years—fromexhibits of military electronics and tanksto cats or flowers, with one of their mostsuccessful missions carried out at anexhibition of Chinese goldfish.

Above all else, loyalty to the GRU isstressed. Agents are to trust no one and tobe prepared to take even the life of a bestfriend for an act against the GRU. Grad-ually, Suvorov became disillusioned withthe GRU, and it was when he was forcedto betray one of his friends that he madeup his mind to defect.

Viktor Suvorov's enthralling account ofhis career as a Soviet spy provides a lookat a world that many believe exists onlyin fiction.

Viktor Suvorov now resides in GreatBritain, where his new identity and exactwhereabouts are kept a closely guardedsecret. He is the author of two previousbooks. Inside the Soviet Army and InsideSoviet Military Intelligence.

Jacket design by Sam Salant

We have a very simple rule: It's a rouble to get in, but twoto get out. That means it's difficult to join the organisation,but a lot more difficult to get out of it. Theoretically there'sonly one way out for any member of the organisation-through the chimney of the crematorium. For some it is anhonourable exit, but for others it is a shameful and terribleway to go, but there's only the one chimney for all of us.That's the only way we can leave this organisation.

—from Inside the Aquarium: The Mailingof a Top Soviet Spy

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